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SFX

#240

MOVIE EXCLUSIVE!

THOR
THE DARK WORLD

The inside story on the return of Marvel's hammer-wielding Avenger

PLUS!

LOKI SPEAKS
"I felt like Mick Jagger"

AGENTS OF SHIELD
CREATORS SPEAK

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YOUR ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO THE NEW SEASON!

THE WALKING DEAD

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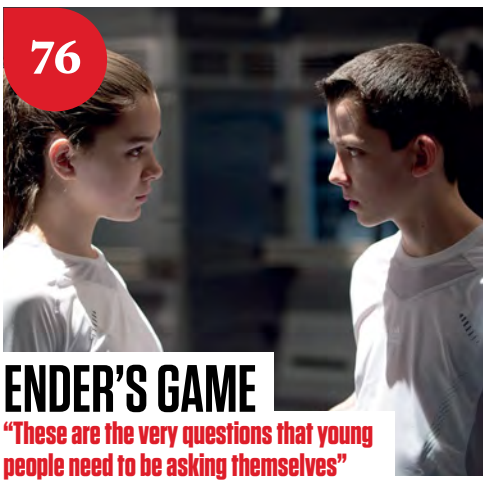

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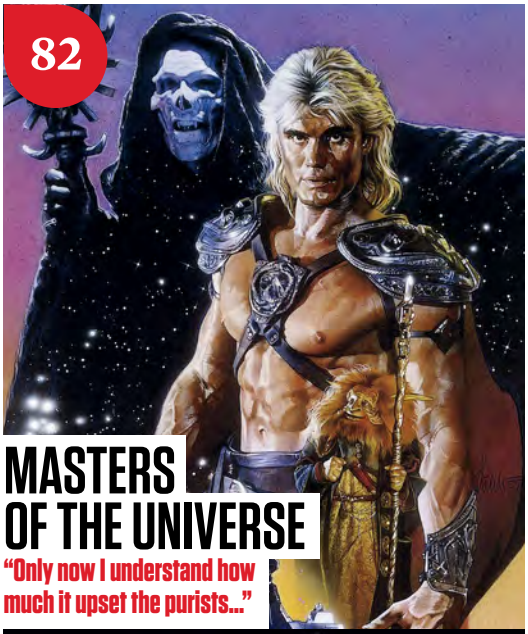

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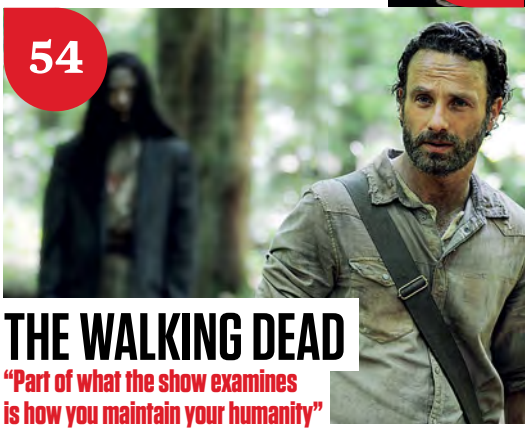

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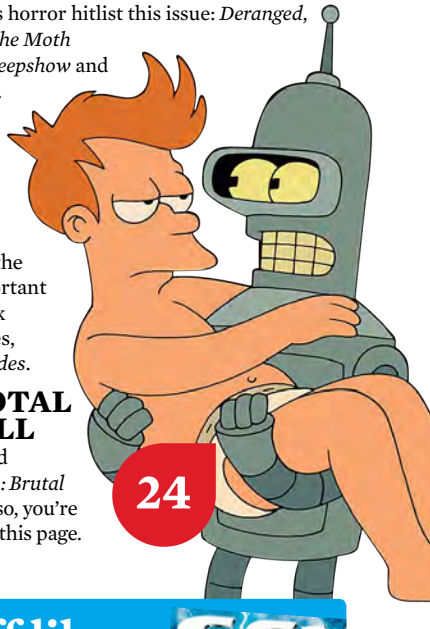

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The Inside Skinny

What your *SFX* chums are thinking about...

Dave Bradley
Editor-in-Chief

RAVES
- Had a smashing time at London's Nine Worlds Geekfest. Will definitely go again next year.
- Book readings? In the pub? Why, BristolCon Fringe, you're spoiling us. http://bit.ly/BristolConFringe
- Loved the finale of *Continuum*. Desperate for the third season now.
- Our Dave Golder is running *Comic Heroes* magazine these days: expect great things.

Richard Edwards
Deputy Editor

RAVES
- Loved the second season of *Continuum*.

RANTS
- Hugh Jackman. Robert Downey Jr. Heath Ledger. The internet said all three were the "wrong" choices to play iconic comic book characters. So let's give Ben Affleck the benefit of the doubt until we've seen him as Batman – superhero movies have a history of getting these calls right.

Nick Setchfield
Features Editor

RAVES
- Ben Affleck as Batman? Decent choice. I loved Bale but I'm glad we've heard the last of that wolfhound-crunching-concrete line delivery.

RANTS
- iTunes only commentary on the *Into Darkness* Blu-ray? Piecemeal retailer exclusives? The marketing plan of a scoundrel. I could punch a Tribble.

Russell Lewin
Production Editor

RAVES
- Summer may be over but keep the sun shining in your sky by grabbing a copy of my new *SFX* bookazine, the *Ultimate Guide To Superheroes*! It's 164 pages of multi-coloured goodness, with previews of all the big forthcoming superhero movies, some ace retro pieces and lots of other fun besides. It's the next best thing to being a superhero.

Ian Berriman
Reviews Editor

RAVES
- It's not an *SFX* show, but I'm loving the quirkiness of *Bates Motel*.
- So many good movie books coming out: *Guillermo del Toro: Cabinet Of Curiosities*, *Chain Saw Confidential*, *The Terminator Vault*.

RANTS
- The stupidity of recording a JJ Abrams commentary for *Into Darkness* then only making it available on iTunes defies belief.

Jordan Farley
Staff Writer

RAVES
- Batfleck is an inspired choice for the role. Watch *The Town* for a hint of how effortlessly he could pull off the Dark Knight's dual personalities.
- The second half of *True Blood* season six was a real return to form. Bravo, Brian Buckner.
- Did you know all four seasons of kids' classic *Goosebumps* are on Netflix? You're welcome.

Jon Coates
Art Editor

RAVES
- Hope rumours of Benedict Cumberbatch in new *Star Wars* turn out to be true. Don't care if he's Sith or Jedi.
- Ben Affleck's a great choice as new Batman. Folk mouthing off against him have obviously not seen his recent work. He's got the chin for it too.
- *Carry On Screaming* coming to Blu-ray. Not a moment too soon in my opinion.

Catherine Kirkpatrick
Deputy Art Editor

RAVES
- Do love a JJ Abrams teaser trailer and his latest doesn't disappoint. Dark and mysterious – it's got me intrigued.
- Happy retirement Hayao Miyazaki! A truly great storyteller and animator. I think a rewatch of my fave Studio Ghibli classics is in order.
- Pleasantly surprised by Richard Curtis's *About Time*. Especially loved the Cornish scenery.

Dave Golder
Special Projects

RANT
- Why does nobody in *Under The Dome* act like anyone would if they are trapped under the dome? And how come there are waves crashing on beach? Ah, cos water doesn't doesn't act like it would if it were trapped under a dome either. Pish.

RAVE
- The show did make me read the book though, which is great!

Adrian Hill
AD Manager

RAVES
- When Matt Smith was cast as the Doctor, I too had reservations. That was until I first saw him climb out of the TARDIS and from then on he was brilliant. I'm sure some of you are thinking the very same about Peter Capaldi. I've heard a few "I'm not watching again" comments, but let's just wait and see. As the Doctor once said: "Change, my dear. And it seems not a moment too soon."

Rachel Smith
Work Experience

RAVES
- I'm super excited for *Marvel's Agents Of SHIELD*; I just hope it lives up to the hype. All I can say is – Coulson lives!
- Reading *The Writer's Tale* with Russell T Davies and Benjamin Cook is making me incredibly nostalgic for the Tenth Doctor era of *Doctor Who* – really cannot wait for Tennant to put on that brown coat again in the 50th anniversary special.

Cecily Mumby
Work Experience

RAVES
- I'm really looking forward to seeing what Peter Capaldi will bring to his incarnation of the Doctor. I wonder if he'll have as many screaming fan girls as Smith or Tennant.

RANTS
- I don't get why they're going to remake *The Crow*. Whether or not you like the original film, it's a cult classic...

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Alfred Hitchcock once said, "The more successful the villain, the more successful the picture." We can assume, then, that the Marvel cinematic universe's success to date has been Loki's doing. Tom Hiddleston was a sensation in both *Thor* and *Avengers Assemble* – the Devil has the best tunes but when Joss Whedon's on dialogue duty bad guys like Loki get the best lines too. And he's embraced the fanbase condensing around these films, playing up to the role at public events like San Diego Comic-Con. Hiddleston owned the stage, appearing in front of thousands of people dressed in the full Loki outfit and taunting the crowd. Now *Thor: The Dark World* looks set to capitalise on Loki's surge of popularity, putting him front and centre in this year's thunder god sequel. Head over to page 46 to read an interview with the bad boy himself, about making the role his own... and about *that* mewling insult.

It's all about the Norse gods for me this month. In another guise (Shane Cortese) Loki's also been jollying up the small screen courtesy of *The Almighty Johnsons*, one of those TV shows that I totally love (p92) but nobody else seems to be watching. Start watching it. TV is very much on our minds this issue and you'll find an entire mini section devoted to the best upcoming shows – 25 of them, no less. Pick up your remote and hurl it at page 49.

Be seeing you,

Dave Bradley, Editor-in-Chief
@SFXDaveB

BBC

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RED ALERT

THE FUTURE FIRST

edited by Richard Edwards

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WEIGHTY MATTERS
Bullock and Clooney blast into space in *Gravity*.

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GORDON'S ALIVE
And doing well, thank you. We track down Flash himself, Sam J Jones.

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Is this really the end for *Futurama*? Again.

THE ZERO THEOREM

Countdown To Zero

Terry Gilliam ponders the meaning of life in his return to sci-fi

EXCLUSIVE DIRECTOR INTERVIEW

DIRECTOR TERRY GILLIAM ADMITS that art imitates life in his upcoming film, *The Zero Theorem*. "Quohen Leth and I share the problem of sitting at home staring at a computer screen and waiting for a call. For him the call was to give meaning to his life, for me a job."

The film – like several of Gilliam's projects – has had a long gestation period. Originally brought to the ex-Python star by the late producer Richard Zanuck, *The Zero Theorem* was to have starred Billy Bob Thornton as the third-person speaking Leth, eventually recast and portrayed by *Django Unchained* Oscar-winner Christoph Waltz.

Originally set to shoot in 2009, *The Zero Theorem* hit a roadblock, sending it to the back of Gilliam's list as promoting *The Imaginarium Of Doctor Parnassus* moved forward. Zanuck passed away in 2012 as the film was resurfacing, passing the producing reins to his son Dean. ↪

TV SPOILER THREAT

SFX's unique system to help you decide whether a news story is safe to read.

GREEN: SAFE FOR ALL VIEWERS

SPOILER THREAT GREEN

It's spoiler free for folk watching at the pace of the UK's five former analogue TV channels. (Waiting for the DVD? We advise caution.)

AMBER: SAFE FOR DIGITAL VIEWERS

SPOILER THREAT

Will not be spoilery to anyone watching at the pace of UK digital TV, whether on cable, Sky or Freeview.

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SPOILER THREAT

You might find spoiler information in here about shows that are yet to air in the UK (although they may have been broadcast in the US).

Chaos Theorem

THE TERRY BEST OF...

SUPPORT NETWORK

The film's impressive supporting cast includes Matt Damon, Tilda Swinton and David Thewlis. "The cast is a collection of brilliant actors who each managed to keep the process of shooting bearable by surprising me every day. Each one of them has a brilliant sense of humour and the ability to ground their characters so that the odd world and situations I put them in is always real."

SUGAR RUSH

When asked about juggling story elements, the director laughs. "I still stick by Mary Poppins' advice when it comes to balancing the 'visceral with the philosophical and intellectual' elements in my films (assuming there are some of the latter): 'A spoonful of sugar helps the medicine go down.' If Mary fails me I start praying to the god of irony."

GOING FOR A SONG

And what's next? "I have another opera – Berlioz's *Benvenuto Cellini* – being prepared for next year (following the success of his production of Berlioz's *The Damnation Of Faust* in 2012), and a race to determine which of my backlogged scripts gets financed first."

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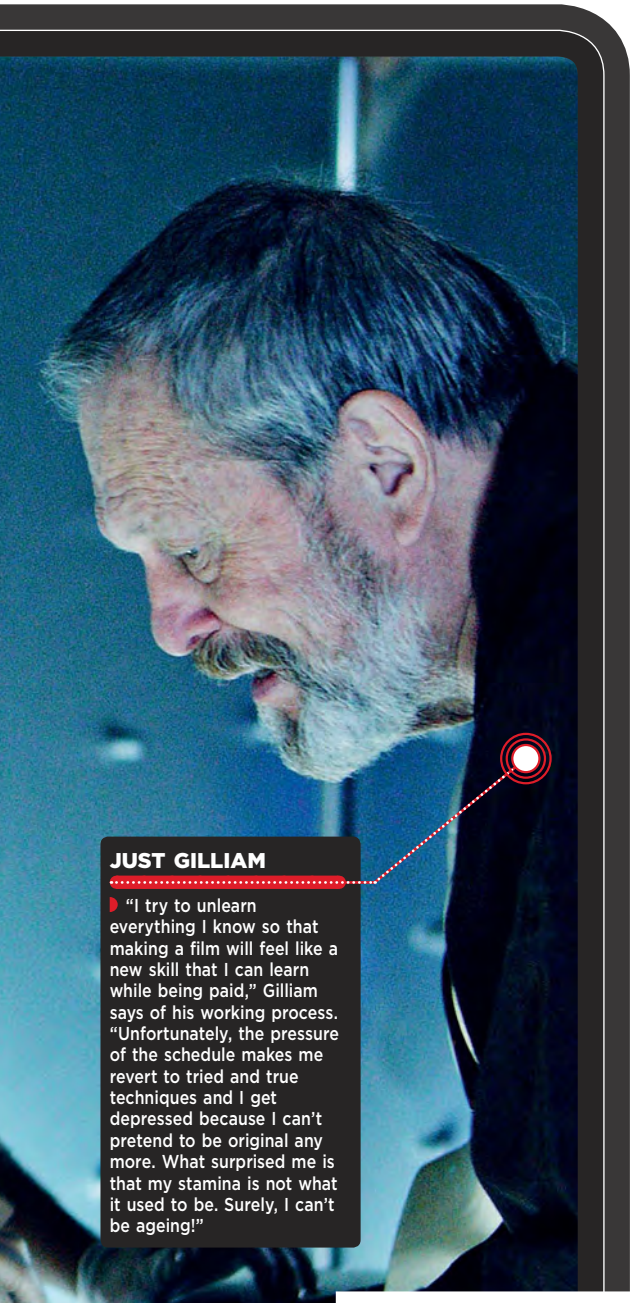
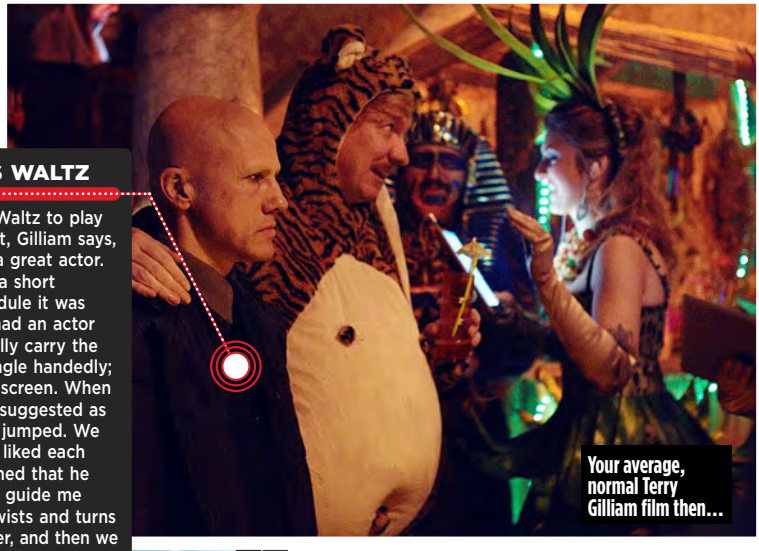


JUST GILLIAM

"I try to unlearn everything I know so that making a film will feel like a new skill that I can learn while being paid," Gilliam says of his working process. "Unfortunately, the pressure of the schedule makes me revert to tried and true techniques and I get depressed because I can't pretend to be original any more. What surprised me is that my stamina is not what it used to be. Surely, I can't be ageing!"



Your average, normal Terry Gilliam film then…

TAKE THIS WALTZ

On casting Waltz to play his protagonist, Gilliam says, "Christoph is a great actor. Since we had a short shooting schedule it was vital that we had an actor who could really carry the film almost single handedly; he's never off screen. When his name was suggested as a possibility, I jumped. We had lunch, we liked each other, I explained that he would have to guide me through the twists and turns of the character, and then we agreed to leap off the cliff together. All very simple."

Gilliam says the new production is almost the same film it would have been despite a different leading man and reduced budget. "Other than some initial discussions with Billy Bob, we never got into the process of actually working together. The story didn't change but the production made a quantum leap to a budget less than half of what was planned four years ago. *Zero Theorem* was made on a budget smaller than anything I had worked on since *Time Bandits*."

The film's script is by first time screenwriter Pat Rushin, and is loosely based on his story *The Call*. "The script has a lot of interesting ideas that related to many of my previous films but was very restricted spatially... three quarters of the film takes place in a single location... a burnt out chapel. The characters were very interesting but its structure was not a normal one and intrigued me because it broke so many narrative rules," says the director. One of the most obvious broken rules is that Quohen Leth speaks in third person, as does the main character in *The Call*.

"The screenplay was based on many of the ideas in the short story but since it's been several years since I read it I can't remember the divergence," continues Gilliam. "In fact, since I have been buried in the editing room the process of rearranging the pieces we shot has managed to make the film diverge from the screenplay. This is normal for me."

Quohen Leth's world is not dissimilar to Sam Lowry's (Jonathan Pryce) in Gilliam's classic *Brazil*. Waltz's Leth is a reclusive genius who works in an Orwellian corporate hierarchy crunching "entities" instead of numbers, and living in a bombed out gothic cathedral, waiting for the call that will change his life. Gilliam admits a resonance with his earlier work. "I think *Zero Theorem* is vaguely related to *Brazil* in that it tries to deal with the madness of the world in 2013. Through the internet and smartphones we are

"It's related to *Brazil* in that it tries to deal with the madness of the world"

overwhelmed with connectivity and information... most of it irrelevant but nevertheless invasive and crushing. How many of us can actually be alone anymore?"

The director is also treading familiar territory visually. Production designer Dave Warren returns from *Doctor Parnassus*, as does costume designer Carlo Poggioli from *The Brothers Grimm* and *Baron Munchausen*. Cinematographer Nicola Pecorini is also on board, with past stints on Gilliam's *Fear And Loathing In Las Vegas*, *Tideland* and *Parnassus*. "The rest of the crew were local to Bucharest. Luckily, the Romanian crew were great, working much harder than crews in the more comfortable parts of Europe. Restrictions always produce interesting results: for example, we didn't have enough futuristic vehicles for our street scenes so we commandeered the studio's golf carts and converted them into taxis. The future will probably steal our desperate idea."

Working on a smaller scale than Gilliam's last few films brought Quohen Leth's personal story forward. "There is a claustrophobia in the film that is battered away by the entry of a very few characters. It's how a man rediscovers his humanity; how he lets go of his protective egotism and discovers empathy and maybe, even, love. God, this sounds like a really boring little art film!" Gilliam laughs.

"Actually, we have a scene of naked people in space, scenes on beautiful tropical islands, a man destroying a monstrous machine, an online psychiatrist, lots of beautiful and funny street advertising and weird cars. Phew, I feel better already."

Of his penchant for combining technology and antiquity with visual effects, Gilliam says, "I love mixing technologies and continue to do so in *ZT*. To entertain myself, I invent systems like 'cuboid computation' and 'liquid memory' thinking I'm being clever and then a month or two later I read that DNA has been used as a memory storage system. The future seems unable to wait for us to get there and so rushes past us. We also have a lot of religious iconography in this film. A 'call' can be many things: not just the telephone, could it be the Holy Spirit descending at Jesus's baptism in the form of a dove, or maybe it's just some noisy pigeons that interrupt Qohen's sleep."

Ultimately the director describes his film as, "Dark, moody, humorous, but also intensely colourful, romantic and emotional. But there are no spaceships or aliens. Or zombies." SFX

The Zero Theorem has just screened at the Venice Film Festival, and is set for 2014 release.

SNOWPIERCER

All Aboard

Top Korean director Bong Joon-Ho catches a very chilly train

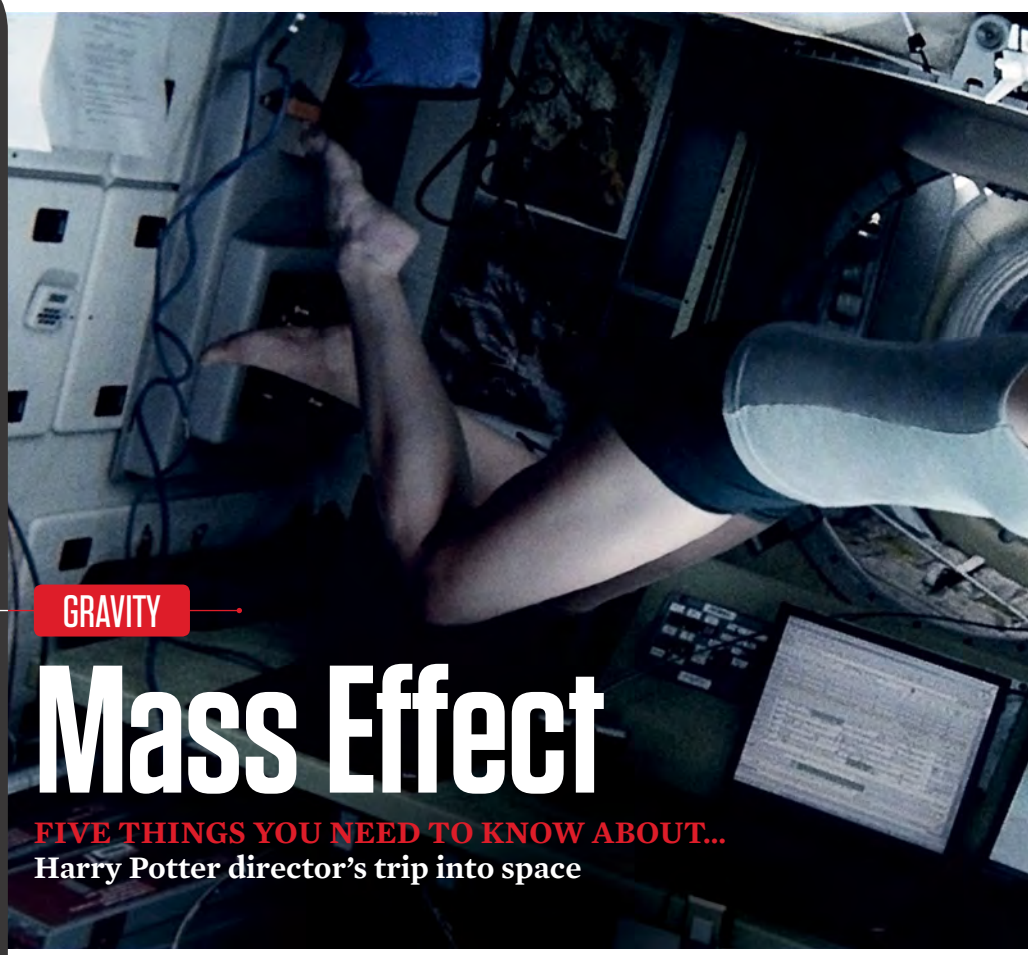
BASED ON THE ACCLAIMED FRENCH graphic novel, the upcoming sci-fi armageddon opus *Snowpiercer* promises to provide genre fans with a suitably dystopian, and thought-provoking, look at the planet in the wake of an environmental disaster. "This is set during a time when most of the Earth's population has been wiped away due to global warming," director Bong Joon-ho tells Red Alert at the Edinburgh Film Festival. "There are some survivors and they exist on a train – called the Snowpiercer – but everyone is separated by their social class. So there is a lot of frustration. It is a film which focuses on this class struggle. I think it is a very relevant story for everyone who has ever thought about the politics and inequality behind capitalism."

Joon-ho, who first came to the attention of genre buffs with his 2006 blockbuster monster mash *The Host*, makes his English language debut with *Snowpiercer*. According to the director he has had carte blanche to realise his first feature made outside the notoriously subversive Korean film industry.

"*Snowpiercer* is still an independent movie," smiles Joon-ho. "This is produced by an independent company in Korea, which is headed by Park Chan-wook, who made *Oldboy*. We have some big name actors, such as Ed Harris and Jamie Bell, but Song Kang-ho, the star of my movie *The Host*, also has a big presence in *Snowpiercer*. I had the freedom to cast this how I wanted and to make the movie that I dreamed about."

One thing that Joon-ho is not necessarily excited about, however, is the upcoming American remake of *The Host*.

"I don't get it," he laughs. "Why don't they just watch my original? It was a perfectly good movie." SFX



GRAVITY

Mass Effect

FIVE THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT...
Harry Potter director's trip into space

▲ **SCI-FACT** Alfonso Cuarón has co-created a TV show called *Believe* for JJ Abrams' Bad Robot production company. It's due to start in 2014.

CUARÓN WANTS TO SEND YOU INTO SPACE

1 As a life-long space geek and wannabe astronaut, director Alfonso Cuarón (*Harry Potter And The Prisoner Of Azkaban*, *Children Of Men*) married his day job with his fascination for the cosmos to make *Gravity*. Co-written with his son, Jonas Cuarón, the film puts the audience in the spacesuit of an astronaut (Sandra Bullock, accompanied by George Clooney) who finds herself adrift in the expanse of space. "The goal was for the film to feel like one of those IMAX documentaries or Discovery Channel documentaries that went absolutely wrong," Cuarón tells Red Alert. "We went through pains to try to honour reality as much as we could. Definitely with the concept of zero-g and no resistance, that was something we went through great pains to try to make it accurate."

IT'S NOT AN EXISTENTIAL TRIP

2 Essentially a character piece with two people fighting their own personal demons orbiting the Earth, some have called *Gravity* this generation's *2001*. But Cuarón is quick to dispel that comparison. "*2001* doesn't apply to this because it's a completely different thing. It's a masterpiece and a very philosophical piece. With *Gravity*, we wanted to explore the journey of adversity, but we also want to be an animating, exciting, dangerous ride. We want it to be like a non-stop thriller structure. So the approach is quite different than *2001*, aside than we both are in space."

VOMIT COMETS WERE TRIED

3 A fan of the long shot, Cuarón initially had a lot of problems figuring out how to practically shoot how he wanted using current technology. "Pretty much the whole film takes place in zero-g with people floating. We tried the vomit comet [NASA's zero-g flight simulator] and it was so much fun but the only problem is that it's very short. The top out time is maybe 20 seconds, which is a blink of an eye with these shots. And Sandra is afraid of airplanes. She said if that's what we have to do, I will have to overcome my fears. I called her and said it wasn't going to work and she was so happy," he laughs.

IT PUSHES CG IN A GOOD WAY

4 "I wanted to make it look real," Cuarón says. "Chris deFaria, who is the visual effects expert at Warner Bros, read and loved the script. He became a big champion of it but he suggested doing CG. I wanted to do it practical and thought CG wasn't going to work. He kept insisting every

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"Pretty much the whole film takes place in zero-g with people floating"

step of the way." Cuarón says that because of his great CG experiences with *Potter*, he was able to compromise. "The most important thing was there was no other way of doing it."

BULLOCK HAD A DIRECT LINE TO NASA

5 Playing the woman floating for her life in space, Bullock says she had to give herself over to the strange process that Cuarón invented to convince the audience she was truly floating. "I wasn't at all in control or had any idea the extent of technology that was involved," Bullock says of the process of shooting in a 9x9 rig that helped her body look weightless. "I wanted to be really accurate so we had a lot of incredible specialists. There were always people on call and several times I was able to call up to space [with astronauts] and ask questions and they'd answer me." SFX

Gravity is released by Warner Bros on Friday 8 November.

Data Flow

BRIEF ENCOUNTERS

WIN! A TRIP TO ANDY SERKIS'S STUDIOS!

Samantha Shannon's debut novel *The Bone Season* (out now) has already been optioned by Andy Serkis's Imaginarium Studios. That's pretty big news for a first-time author, so we've teamed up with publishers Bloomsbury to offer one lucky winner and a friend the chance to spend a day at the performance capture studios in London. Five runners up will receive a signed first edition copy of *The Bone Season*.

To stand a chance of winning, visit http://bit.ly/SFXserkis. You've got until 30 September, and the competition is only open to participants in the UK. For all terms and conditions, visit http://bit.ly/SFXserkis.

DON'T QUOTE ME

"If Joe [Ahearne] agrees to direct the 100th anniversary special, I will bring my sonic and a stairlift, and I, the Ninth Doctor, vow to save the universe and all you apes in it"

Christopher Eccleston "loves the Doctor" – but a return would be conditional.

MY SCI-FI

BECAUSE CELEBRITIES LIKE SF TOO

Anthony Horowitz

As well as being the creator of hit TV shows *Midsomer Murders* and *Foyle's War*, Anthony Horowitz has sold over 13 million books in his Alex Rider spy series. The latest title, *Russian Roulette*, is out now from Walker Books.

FAVOURITE SF/FANTASY FILMS

My favourite SF film of all time would be *Quatermass And The Pit*. What I love about that is its familiarity – it's so London, the *Evening Standard* blowing in the wind. I have two favourites from Spielberg, *ET* and *Close Encounters – ET* I go back to because it is such a wonderfully humane story. I'll mention two by John Carpenter: *Dark Star*, his first ever film, and *The Thing*. Finally there's *Silent Running*. It's deceptively simple, and Bruce Dern gives a really great performance.

FAVOURITE SF/FANTASY TV

The Invaders. As a TV writer myself, I'm still in awe at the construction. It's ripe for remaking, and I would love to do it.

FAVOURITE SF/FANTASY BOOKS

The short stories of Robert Sheckley are astoundingly clever and funny and thought-provoking. I love the work of Dan Simmons, particularly *Hyperion* and *The Fall Of Hyperion* – big fat science fiction stories full of interesting ideas. My favourite science fiction story of all time is *Childhood's End* by Arthur C Clarke.

FAVOURITE SF/FANTASY COMICS

One of the greatest tragedies of my life was losing the whole of *Spider-Man*, all of *X-Men*, all of *Fantastic Four*, numbers one through to 170 or 180 in each case. We moved house and a builder stole them. I said "Mum, Dad, my comics have been stolen!" and they didn't call the police. When you think about it, nowadays it's about half a million pounds gone.

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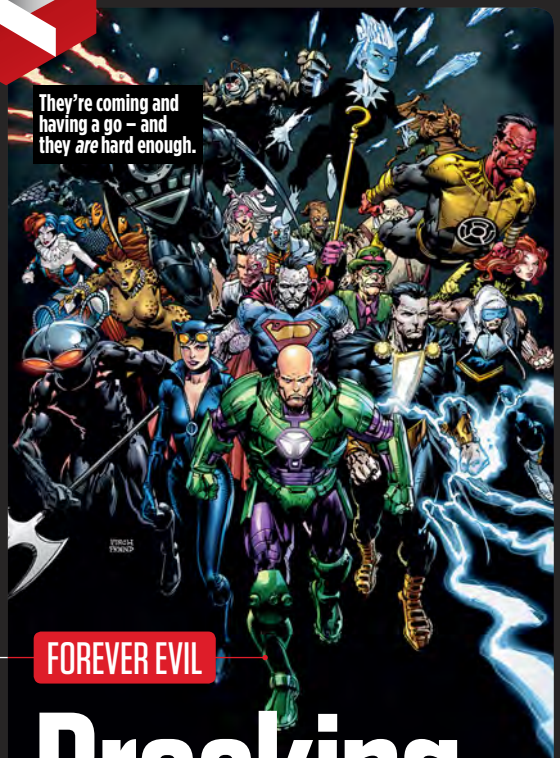

FOREVER EVIL

Breaking Bad

Villains become heroes in new DCU crossover

THIS MONTH THE DC UNIVERSE TURNS upside down as Geoff Johns and artist David Finch launch *Forever Evil*. When Earth is invaded by supervillains from another world and the Justice League is out of action, our only hope is the very people known for trying to take it over – the DCU villains. "If you're a conman you need a mark, you need the rule of law to take advantage of," says Finch. "Villains are like parasites and need their host. When something comes along that is so bad that it's killing the host, they end up becoming heroes themselves so they can save the host and continue to feed off it."

Leading Earth's rogues against the invaders is Lex Luthor. "I think Luthor's biggest genius is that he's incredibly good at looking at a situation and finding the best advantage for himself," says Finch. "It's hard to beat somebody like that. He knows how to use everyone for his own interests and he thinks faster than anyone around him. He's got his armour but his real power is his ability to take any negative situation and turn it into a positive." However, Luthor's instinct for self-preservation is not without drawbacks. "None of the villains can trust each other," Finch explains, "so there is no clear-cut champion to root for and you never know what somebody is going to do because these characters are capable of anything." The cover for issue 2 features a familiar Caped Crusader. "This is a villains story, but you can't kill Batman. He's like a cockroach." SFX

Forever Evil is out now from DC.

▲ **SCI-FACT** Prior to starring in *Flash Gordon*, Sam J Jones was a nude centrefold model in *Playgirl* magazine.

Data Flow

BRIEF ENCOUNTERS

HUGO VICTORS

This year's Hugo Awards have been announced at LoneStarCon 3 in San Antonio, Texas. Among the big prizes, **Avengers Assemble** won Best Dramatic Presentation (Long Form), while in Short Form, ace **Game Of Thrones** episode "Blackwater" walked away with

the prize. John Scalzi's **Redshirts** was named Best Novel, while Brian K Vaughan's **Saga: Volume 1** was Best Graphic Story.

THEY ARE LEGEND

The shortlists for 2013's David Gemmell Legend Awards for Fantasy have also been announced. Scrapping for best novel are Joe Abercrombie's *Red Country*, Jay Kristoff's *Stormdancer*, Mark Lawrence's *King Of Thorns*, Helen Lowe's *The Gathering Of The Lost* and Brent Weeks' *The Blinding Knife*. The Morningstar Award for best debut novel and Ravenheart Award for best cover art will also be presented at the ceremony, which will be held at World Fantasy Con.

DON'T QUOTE ME

"I apologise to all those people who were so angry about it. I'm fascinated by the people who hated that movie and feel compelled to watch it again, which always blows my mind"

Original screen Hulk **Eric Bana** is much calmer than his big green alter ego.

AFTERLIFE 82

Sam J Jones

Flash Gordon in *Flash Gordon*

"Gordon's alive???" Very much so, in the form of actor Sam J Jones, who portrayed sport star-turned-saviour of the universe Flash Gordon in the 1980 cult film favourite. These days, Jones runs a firm specialising in high-risk corporate security, but still finds time for the occasional screen role, as in Seth MacFarlane's *Ted*.

Would you like to play the role again?
Sure, yeah. I'm not saying they're the same, but a lot of the roles I tend to do are either good guy/bad guy cop, military man, or some kind of hero. I enjoy that.

What's the strangest request you've had from a fan?
To sign money. I won't sign money. Or their breasts. You gotta keep it PG and family friendly.

Would any of your character's skills or attributes have been useful in real life?
All of them. I was a marine before I was an actor. So all of that came to light in the films I've done and am doing.

What would your character be doing now?
He'd probably be doing the same thing. Remember, he's one of the few superheroes who did not have any superpowers. He depended solely on his wit, wisdom and physical ability.

Is there anything you think was unfinished about the character's story?
Part one was unfinished. It left things open for a sequel. That's what we hope to do soon – if they can stop playing games with the options and the developments. Otherwise I'd have to come in and buy the rights, wouldn't I [laughs]?

Did you get any souvenirs from the set?
I have an original t-shirt that says "Flash". And I have the replica of the rocket cycle as well. The one that we had made in *Ted*.

What would it say on Flash's gravestone?
One of the descriptive lines was "The Greatest American Hero Of All Time". I kind of like that.

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STAR TURN

Ginnifer Goodwin

Once Upon A Time's Snow White is finding Neverland in season three

A BUMPY RIDE

"The trip to Neverland is fraught with good intentions. I think I can say our intended destination is reached but we're going to have to put our egos aside and come together if we're not going to kill each other. We're going to have to figure out who can help us here because the rules of every realm are different. We know we'd never be so foolish to use our Prince Charming/Snow White tactics in another realm."

HER DARK HEART

"I think this is Snow's cross she bears throughout the beginning of the season. I've only seen a couple of scripts and I know very little of what's to come, but Snow has to come together. She's going to have to reconcile these two disparate ends of herself to be useful to anybody [in Neverland]. Hopefully, it will inspire her to address the grey parts of herself."

FATAL FLAW

"Trust is one of her biggest downfalls and flaws. She gives everyone the benefit of the doubt all the time. I find it incredibly annoying. Gee, isn't it a shocker that the queen lied to her again? She gives everybody 400,000 chances. She's a bit of a doormat that way."

SEA LEGS

"I am covered in bruises you can't see through the make-up but I'm beaten to shreds. Is that a term? It is now. The bruises are literally from the rocking of the ship and I am clumsy as clumsy can be. I think I ran into, and broke, a lot of things on the pirate ship."

HAPPILY EVER AFTER

"Her happy ending for sure would be living with Prince Charming and Emma and Henry and eight dwarves in a castle in the Enchanted Forest."

***Once Upon A Time* returns to US screens on ABC from Sunday 29 September. The show airs on Channel 5 in the UK.**

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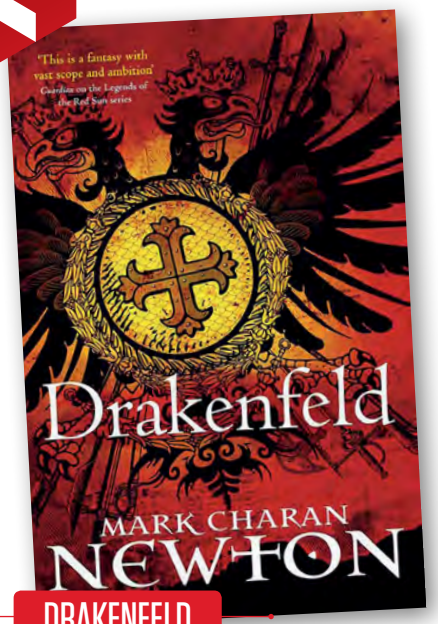

DRAKENFELD

To Die For

Mark Charan Newton on his fantasy whodunit

Forget supernatural police procedurals set in contemporary London – Mark Charan Newton is going one step further. Set in the epic realms of the Royal Vispasian Kingdom, *Drakenfeld* centres around the titular army officer who is embroiled in a mystifying case.

"Balancing crime and fantasy is quite tricky," the author tells Red Alert. "For a crime to feel meaningful, a writer has to negotiate some of the eccentricities of the fantastic aesthetic. But crime is a good vehicle for showing the depth of a world, as through the eyes of a detective character all manner of strange things can be presented."

Drakenfeld has much in common with historical protagonists such as Matthew Shardlake, CJ Sansom's popular 16th century sleuth. "They both possess strong morals and a sense of duty and honour," reasons Charan Newton. "With a strong moral framework in place, the reader will feel concerned about the crime, and that an established way of life is being threatened."

Indeed the novel's core premise is inspired by a classic crime trope. "I wanted to set up a really intricate plot, so I decided to design one of the iconic genre plots – the locked-room mystery," explains the author. "Drakenfeld is called to investigate the murder of the king's sister but it's an impossible crime as she's found in a sealed temple, which was surrounded by people and no one saw anyone go in or out at the time of the killing." SFX

Drakenfeld is published by Tor on 10 October.

Sci-Fact In his spare time, Mark Charan Newton runs a website devoted to whisky – www.malt-review.com.

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Aerial Assault

SF TV ROUND UP

NEWBIES

- **Under The Dome** has been so successful in its summer berth, breaking records for a June launch, that CBS has ordered a new sci-fi show for summer 2014. The network wants 13 episodes of **Extant**, a thriller from Steven Spielberg's Amblin Television, about a female astronaut pregnant with a part human, part alien baby.
- Elsewhere, *X-Files* creator Chris Carter is writing an apocalyptic pilot for Amazon called **The After**, and NBC has ordered a pilot for **Paradise**, in which Las Vegas has become the world's biggest maximum security prison – *Escape From Las Vegas*, anyone?
- On an even less original note, HBO is teaming up with JJ Abrams and *Dark Knight* writer Jonathan Nolan for pilot based on 1973 movie **Westworld**; a project inspired by William Peter Blatty's **The Exorcist** is being shopped around US networks; and Syfy is developing a pilot spun-off from Terry Gilliam's **12 Monkeys**.

Continued on p22.

DON'T QUOTE ME

"I was approached. But I didn't want to be the Doctor. No disrespect to *Doctor Who* or anything, I just think that it comes with too much baggage"

Bill Nighy explains why he chose not to explore space and time in the TARDIS.

FANTOMEX MAX

Raising Hope

Mutant master thief returns, with long absent comics creator at the helm

He isn't reviving Marvelman but Andrew Hope has actually spent even longer in the comic book wilderness than the iconic British superhero.

After pencilling the first two issues of Mark Millar's *Shadowmen* for the long-defunct Trident comics, Andrew Hope dropped off the comic book radar for a couple of decades. Now the author is making a dramatic return to the medium, teaming up with artist Shaun Crystal on a *Fantomex* four-parter for Marvel's grown-up Max imprint.

"It's a bit of a comeback story but it's also more of a *Cinderella* story," says Hope. "The *Fantomex* project was already in development but it had stalled. A plot existed but there had been creative differences and it had just never moved past that. Jon asked me if I'd be interested in taking a look at it and when I read it, it really struck me that I knew why it wasn't working."

Rather than featuring the usual supporting cast of thousands, the Grant Morrison-created master thief will be the only mutant to appear in the miniseries, which won't tie in to the character's ongoing stint in *Uncanny X-Force*. "The villains of the piece exploit a flaw in Fantomex's character that they've discovered," reveals Hope. "They use it to coerce him into retrieving this object for them that will facilitate their grand plan. It's mostly an action/adventure story with some good character stuff and a little bit of introspection. Fantomex is an arrogant sod but he has to re-evaluate himself after realising that he's not as perfect as he thought he was." SFX

Fantomex Max launches on 2 October from Marvel.

Three moons are rising. When the trinity is complete, the endgame will begin.

The Wild Hunt is coming.

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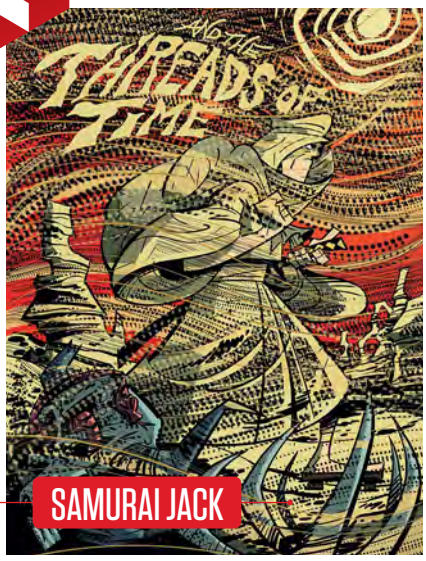

Jack It

Genndy Tartakovsky's cartoon has a new home

Cartoon Network's wandering warrior returns with the arrival of *Samurai Jack* at IDW Publishing. Writer Jim Zub will be steering Jack's sword-slinging adventures with artist Andy Suriano, character designer on the show. "When I heard IDW had plans to bring Jack back, I sought out the editors and said I absolutely needed to be a part of it. So, I basically begged," Suriano admits.

"The concept is an amazing foundation to explore genre storytelling," says Zub. "*Samurai Jack* is an iconic 'Wandering Hero' odyssey built on classic archetypes and pulp-style storytelling that pushes themes and characters forward with new settings and unexpected challenges. It's Akira Kurosawa meets Ridley Scott with a side of Hanna-Barbera."

Jack was never a verbose hero and the new creative team plans to respect his silence. "My biggest fear of this re-launch was if someone suddenly inserted Jack dialogue that rivalled Aaron Sorkin-type diatribes," says Suriano. "I've got to give Jim credit for really understanding the character's stoic nature and letting the action speak for him and ultimately trusting me to visually describe everything he doesn't say."

Jack may be a hero out of time, but Zub believes the Bushido Code is a timeless ideal. "Imagine how great the world would be if more people would conduct themselves under those tenets with real integrity?" he says. "Our fiction needs more characters who do the right things for the right reasons. That doesn't mean they're flawless or never make mistakes, but having examples of people who always strive for something better... it's important." SFX

Samurai Jack comes to IDW in October.

THE DOSSIER

The chimps are here in Dawn Of The Planet Of The Apes

Giant ape is thinking: "Dawn is too early to start the day."

SO THE DAWN COMES AFTER THE RISE...

Let's be honest – this isn't going to end well for us, is it? When we last left what is destined to be the *Planet Of The Apes*, humanity was about to encounter a self-inflicted bloody nose as a man-made virus proceeded to jet around the planet. Set ten years after *Rise Of The Planet Of The Apes*, *Dawn* will bring us one crucial step closer to being goddamned all to hell.

"There are stories about what happened and then there are stories where you know what happened and it's about why," says director Matt "*Cloverfield*" Reeves. "And what's exciting to me is that this story, we know where it goes, so the question is: how do we get there?"

Dawn, then, will explore that last failure of communication, as humanity's dredges wash up against the new civilisation that Caesar has been trying to create. "Caesar rules a primitive but majestic kingdom," Reeves explains. "But [once human survivors are discovered], it becomes a question of survival. Can these two populations co-exist? Can they find a way to live together?"

ARE WE STILL HAILING CAESAR?

Having given the Oscars a tricky philosophical debate about what constitutes performance, Andy Serkis is back for more mo-capped action as "monkey with the most" Caesar.

"One of the big challenges of this movie was to take Caesar forward," says Serkis, "to have him become a leader with responsibility and to inject some of the humanity he grew up with into that society."

Joining Serkis in the mo-cap unitard will be Judy Greer and Toby Kebbel as Caesar's wife and son. As he helps his followers evolve and communicate, Caesar's relationships with the apes will decide the fate of the planet; as the bridge between apes and humans, Caesar finds himself torn between the two worlds.

"It's a very rich and complex world that Caesar exists in," reckons Serkis, "and he's under huge pressure."

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The horse needs to get the monkey off his back.

Dawn of the Planet of the Apes

WHO'S REPRESENTING THE HOMO SAPIENS?

- The old rulers are coming to terms with their new neighbours. *Zero Dark Thirty*'s Jason Clarke plays former architect Malcolm, who finds himself negotiating with Caesar.

"He has a son [Kodi Smit-McPhee] and is trying to find a way for his family to stay alive. That broadens to his community, so he finds a role in that. He finds his inner ape as well. He finds a lot about himself through his interactions out in the woods."

Naturally, some are ambivalent about sharing the planet with those damn dirty apes: Gary Oldman plays the leader of the human resistance.

"What's so great about the *Apes*' franchise is it's really about us," suggests Reeves. "We talk about [how] the apes are the animals, but... we're the animals and it's really a way for us to look at our nature."

WHO'S INVOLVED?

- Matt Reeves (right) directs
- Andy Serkis is Caesar
- Jason Clarke is Malcolm
- Gary Oldman is Dreyfus
- Kodi Smit-McPhee is Malcolm's son
- Keri Russell is Malcolm's new partner
- Judy Greer is Cornelia
- Toby Kebbell is Koba

WHEN WILL WE SEE IT?

- Expect to see the Planet Of The Apes' dawn rise - in 3D! - on 17 July 2014.

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THE LEGO MOVIE

Block Party

A little plastic man holds the key to saving reality

"Whaddya mean, I'm Ben Affleck now?"

SCI-FACT *Avengers Assemble* star Cobie Smulders has crossed over into the DC Universe, voicing Wonder Woman in *The Lego Movie*.

IN WORLD OF SUPERHEROES, wizards and Teenage Turtles, can one ordinary, er, Lego man make a difference? That's the question posed by *The Lego Movie*, the upcoming film from Phil Lord and Chris Miller.

"That's been a really fun experience, just because it's Lego through that filter of Lord and Miller," says executive producer Allison Abbate. "They're really funny directors – they did *21 Jump Street* and *Cloudy With A Chance Of Meatballs* – so it's a fresh take."

With so many Lego bricks to choose from, how do you create a central storyline?

"By just being true to the love that people have for those characters," says Abbate, "and just really going into the rich font of mini figs, as they call them. It's the underdog yellow Lego character who has to go on this journey to save his world. So it's a similar trajectory to a hero's journey, but it's with Lego. It's the tone of the movie that makes it really fresh. Those directors have such a great point of view, and a great voice. Hearing that voice through these characters makes them come to life in a way that feels so natural and so funny."

Alongside the actors voicing such characters as Batman (Will Arnett), Uni-Kitty (Allison Brie) and the wise sage Vitruvius (Morgan Freeman), is *Guardians Of The Galaxy*'s Chris Pratt as Emmet, the film's reluctant champion.

"It's a cast of thousands. But Chris Pratt is the main character. He's got such an appealing voice. He's your underdog hero." SFX

The Lego Movie is released by Warner on Friday 14 February 2014.

FREEZE FRAME

This month: Keanu dons a kimono in 47 Ronin

Hot off the back of his directorial debut, martial arts movie *Man Of Tai Chi*, Keanu Reeves is returning to the Far East for *47 Ronin*, a fantastical retelling of the famous Japanese legend.

In the original story 47 samurai spend two years planning revenge after their master commits seppuku [ritual suicide]. In this take Reeves stars as Kai, a British/Japanese outcast who joins the 47 ronin in a mission of vengeance.

Only, this isn't the feudal Japan found in history books. The land is littered with shape-shifting dragon ladies, grumpy giants and hulking horned beasts. Needless to say, the most excellent Kai will have his work cut out for him.

Commercials director Carl Erik Rinsch is at the helm of the $175 million epic, co-written by *Drive*'s Hossein Amini. Reshoots and a year-long delay have added fuel to rumours of a troubled production for the film; find out if they're unfounded this Christmas. SFX

47 Ronin swings into cinemas on Thursday 26 December courtesy of Universal.

Director Rinsch is an extraordinary visualist, as this colourful shot suggests.

Keanu Reeves plays the chosen one. Not Neo, Kai.

Muscular giant with a ball and chain? No probs.

After years of enslavement, Kai is recruited by the leader of the ronin.

Are they on Pandora?

The Wolverine ain't the only film to have a silver samurai this year.

Something tells us these villagers don't stand a chance.

The Lord Of The Ronin?

The majority of the cast are Japanese nationals.

Pacific Rim's Rinko Kikuchi is the one transforming into this dragon.

The Magnificent 47.

Hang on, is that a lightsaber? Or just a trick of the light?

The Buzz

Dave B

Looking like an amalgam of *Seven Samurai*, *300* and *Lord Of The Rings*, this ought to be a film forged to my specifications. But I find this overlong trailer oddly unengaging. Sure, it's heaving with special effects but there's very little genuine emotion in there and the line "I'm not scared of you"/"You should be" seems torn straight from the cliché writer guidebook.

Jordan

I've been waiting to see what Rinsch can do ever since he was tipped to direct the *Alien* prequel, but there's little here to convince me the story and characters won't be as blunt as a toy shop sword.

Rich

This looks like *The Last Samurai* meets *The Wolverine* meets *300* meets *The Matrix*. Is that too random a mix to sit together in one movie? Keanu has a habit of picking plum action roles and this could well be another, but I'm more curious than excited.

Nick

I've had a weakness for this kind of caper since growing up with *The Water Margin*. It has a promising sweep but I can't help thinking I'd rather be watching Yimou Zhang's version.

Rachel Smith (Work Experience)

Looks visually great, but overall it just reminds me of a poor man's *300*. At least Keanu Reeves can put all those martial arts skills he learned from *The Matrix* to good use.

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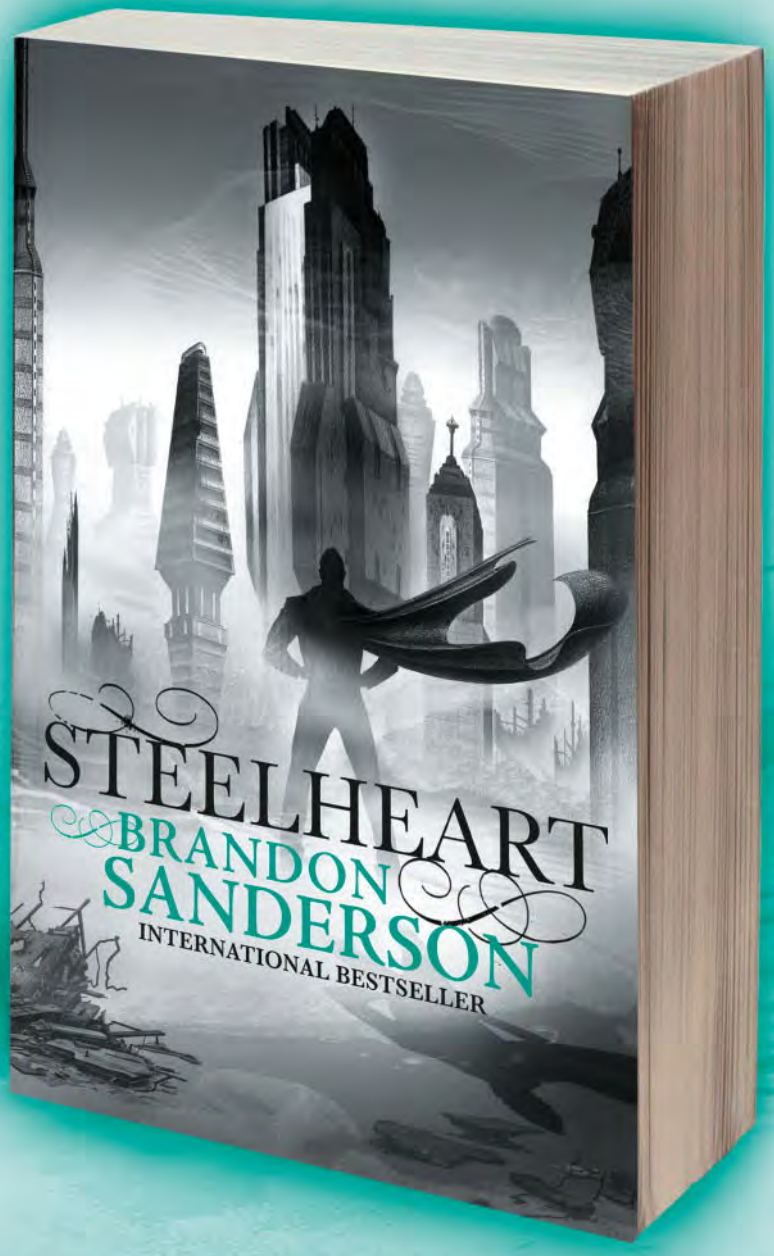
THE BATTLE TO TAKE BACK EARTH HAS BEGUN



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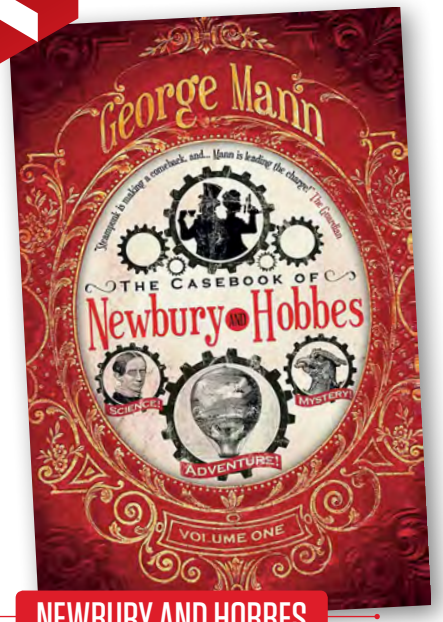

NEWBURY AND HOBBES

A Mann Apart

A look at the files of the steampunk detective duo

SOMETIMES THE BEST THING AN author can do is to follow their heart. Initially created as a diversion from the difficult space opera George Mann was working on, Newbury & Hobbes has grown into his most popular series. Five years after first instalment *The Affinity Bridge*, Mann has assembled *The Casebook Of Newbury & Hobbes*, a collection of short stories.

Ranging from the tale of Sir Maurice Newbury's previous partner Templeton Black to several festive stories, the *Casebook* not only acts as an introduction to the gentleman investigator and his loyal assistant Veronica Hobbes, but also provides long-time fans with new insights. "I'd like to think that it gives new readers a flavour of what Newbury & Hobbes is all about, as well as filling in some of the gaps for existing readers," Mann tells Red Alert.

Mann is hard at work on fifth volume *The Revenant Express*. "We follow two main threads – Veronica and Bainbridge investigating a series of unusual deaths a few months earlier, and Newbury and Veronica's sister, Amelia, making a fateful train journey. The story then dovetails in explosive fashion, with assassins, kidnappings and a plague outbreak." SFX

The Casebook... is published by Titan on Friday 27 September.

Aerial Assault

SF TV ROUND UP

CASTING COUCH

- TV-land's casting directors have been rather busy this month, as the new telly season kicks into gear. 2013's biggest new show **Agents Of SHIELD** has signed up former John Lennon Ian Hart in an as-yet-unknown recurring role. Jason Dohring (aka the best thing in *Moonlight*) will be a baddie in the CW's **Tomorrow People** remake, while the increasingly ubiquitous Tobias Menzies (*Doctor Who*, *Game Of Thrones*, the Bond movies, er, *Eternal Law*) will play both Frank Randall and "Black Jack" Randall in Ronald D Moore's adaptation of **Outlander** for Starz.
- Among the returning shows, *Battlestar Galactica* and *Continuum*'s Tahmoh Penikett will play warrior angel Ezekiel in **Supernatural**; *Angel*'s Alexis Denisof has joined the cast of **Grimm** as Viktor Albert Wilhelm George Beckendorf (Eric Renard's cousin); Joanna Garcia Swisher will be little mermaid Ariel in **Once Upon A Time**; and former *Stargate* doctor Teryl Rothery will show up as Jean Loring in **Arrow**.

DON'T QUOTE ME

"You know, he's not playing King Lear. It's Batman! Bruce Wayne is the more challenging part of the role, and Ben will be great"

Matt Damon gives his two cents on internet moaners dissing old chum Ben Affleck's Batman casting.

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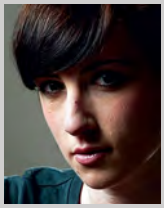
SCI-FACT The eighth instalment of Diana Gabaldon's Outlander novel series is due in early 2014.

NEW AUTHOR

Laure Eve



Born in Paris and raised in Cornwall, Laure Eve works in book marketing, and has debut novel *Fearsome Dreamer* published by Hot Key Books on 3 October. Despite speaking the lingo, she won't be doing her own French translation.

What would you write as the book's cover blurb?
Fearsome Dreamer is about a boy who may be the most dangerous human alive. A girl who has a talent for dreaming. A man who kills for a living. And a castle that seems to contain all worlds, and all times, and everything that ever was, is, or will be...

You work in publishing (at Hachette) in your day job. Did you ask any authors/editors for advice?
I should have definitely done that. I didn't, really. I simply didn't want anyone I worked with to know I was writing. It was my secret life. I definitely won't deny that knowing how the industry works is a bonus, though. I think it can make you very level-headed about your chances.

Given your French/English heritage, was it important to you that both were reflected in the novel?
I didn't consciously set out to do that – the French/English thing just leaked in somehow. I've always found the tension between France and England quite interesting, balancing precariously as I am on the fence.

Have you developed your world much beyond what we see in the book?
If you want it to be believable, even the barest details should probably be sketched out ideas. The single question you should answer – how do people survive here? So how do they get around, how do they buy/barter for food... Even if none of this makes it into the book, it'll influence little things like the brief description of a piece of furniture.

Which SF/fantasy authors would you like to be compared with in your dream review – and why?
Someone online mentioned *Fearsome Dreamer* in the same sentence as Trudi Canavan's The Black Magician trilogy, which I've been meaning to read forever, and someone else has compared the writing style to Laini Taylor's *Daughter Of Smoke And Bone*. She's a beautiful writer. And there is a cadre of female YA fantasy writers who I admire very much at the moment – Rae Carson, Leigh Bardugo and Sarah J Maas. They're doing for YA fantasy what *Game Of Thrones* is doing for adult fantasy. They rule.

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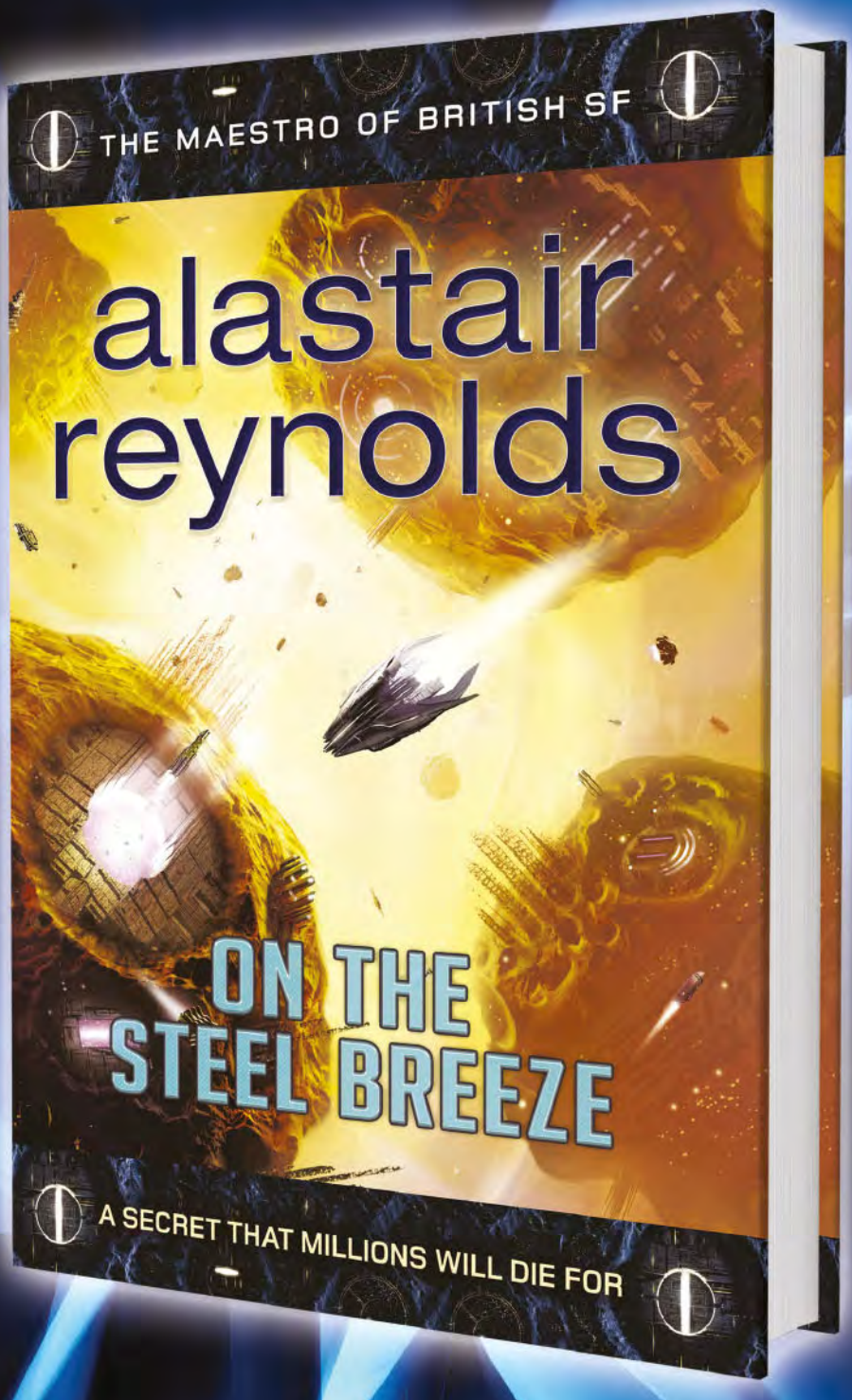
The most anticipated SF novel of the year!



The Maestro of British SF returns.

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We suspect both these smiles will soon disappear.

CURSE OF CHUCKY

Living Doll

Chucky gets creepy again for "old school" fifth sequel...

CINEMA'S MOST INFAMOUS demented doll is back with *Curse Of Chucky*, the sixth instalment in the *Child's Play* franchise and the first to land direct-to-DVD.

"For years, the home entertainment division at Universal have told me that they want to make a new Chucky movie," series creator and director Don Mancini tells Red Alert at this year's FrightFest. "But my plan was to remake *Child's Play* so I initially resisted the idea of doing another sequel. Unfortunately, in order to remake the first film some very difficult legal issues needed to be sorted out and, when it became clear that was going to take a long time, I sort of gave up on it. At that point I thought, 'Okay let's just do a part six.'"

The new *Child's Play* represents the continuation of Chucky's attempts to find a child to swap souls with. However, don't expect the black humour of the last few films or Chucky's plastic partner Tiffany in this sixth sequel...

"Everyone involved in this movie knew that it was time to make the franchise scary again," Mancini continues. "This entry continues a few years after *Seed Of Chucky*, the last movie, so we are not denying the rest of the franchise despite the shift in tone. Brad Dourif returns to voice the character – and the story focuses on just one doll: Tiffany is gone for the time being. Chucky is kept in the shadows in this movie. In *Curse Of Chucky*, he is in an old dark house, during a stormy night, and the atmosphere is a lot like a classic old gothic horror movie. I don't think the fans will be disappointed." SFX

Curse Of Chucky is released by Universal on Monday 21 October.

FUTURAMA

Future's End

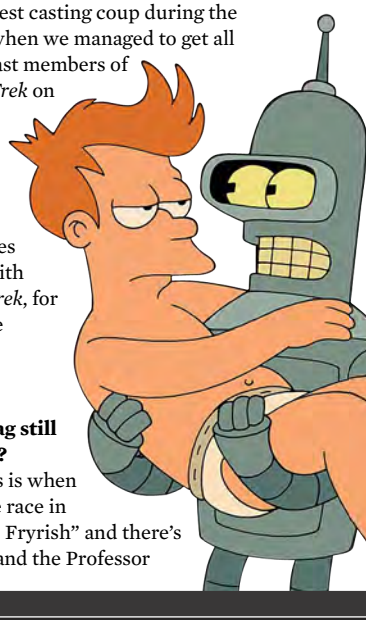
As Planet Express closes its doors for the final time (again), showrunner David X Cohen looks back

▲ SCI-FACT *Aloha, Mars!* and *Doomsville* were early names considered for *Futurama*.

▶ *Futurama* never had a traditional existence but it certainly retained its geek cred and dedicated audience.
Yes! All in all we did seven seasons and 140 episodes. I've been saying to people, in our memory it's been a choppy history but when you just add up those numbers not many shows get to do that. It's been a long haul, just not on a straight sidewalk. I feel very proud in terms of what we ended up with and the final pile of episodes.

▶ You've been cancelled so often, how did you plan for the real end?
In our minds, it will actually be our fourth finale. I do feel pride that we've gotten to do that but it is a worrisome sign when you have a lot of experience writing your last episode. Something went wrong along the way. As for this finale we had to be very careful because we didn't want to take the easy way out and have everyone blown up at the end, especially now in hindsight. We also didn't want all of the characters standing around like in *Star Wars VI* with ghosts and Ewoks waving. What we found in our many experiences writing the series finale is if we can get a big sci-fi show with a touching Fry and Leela story that seems to work. We wanted to reward the fans who got invested in that relationship.

▶ What guest stars were most memorable?
Certainly the biggest casting coup during the original run was when we managed to get all of the surviving cast members of the original *Star Trek* on in the same episode and that was quite special because, how do I say this, they all have different types of relationships with each other. *Star Trek*, for me, was one of the biggest influences on *Futurama*.



▶ What science gag still makes you laugh?
One of the classics is when they are at a horse race in "The Luck Of The Fryrish" and there's a quantum finish and the Professor

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Bender won't miss this in his retirement.

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screams, "No fair! You changed the outcome by measuring it!" I love it when we can say you would not see that joke on another sitcom.

How did the upcoming *Futurama*/*The Simpsons* crossover come about?
Al Jean, the showrunner of *The Simpsons*, called Matt Groening and me about a special crossover episode. I immediately got nervous because Matt could have gone either way. He is very protective of his shows and he thinks of them as very different entities. He likes to say *The Simpsons* is a cartoon but *Futurama* is real. But Matt thought it was a pretty good idea, so then I said, "Me too!" It's very exciting but entirely generated by *The Simpsons* staff. It'll either be the season finale in May 2014 or the next season premiere in 2014. It's not a cameo and it genuinely requires the cast to be there.

Do you see the *Futurama* returning after that in some way?
At this moment, I feel like we're genuinely done. However people don't believe me when I say that because I've said that at least two times before. My opinion has never affected reality very much on that topic. There are certainly more options now with various streaming options. I'm taking a break – it's been six solid years of work with the DVD movies and the Comedy Central seasons so it's an enforced vacation. We're not sure how aggressively, or if at all, we want to try and bring it back. SFX

Futurama has just finished airing on Comedy Central in the US. The show airs on Sky1 in the UK.

news warp

ALL FACT, NO FILLER

- **James Spader** to play meddlesome robot **Ultron** in *Avengers: Age Of Ultron*
- **Bradley Cooper** will be the voice of **Rocket Raccoon** in *Guardians Of The Galaxy*
- **The Tomorrow People** and **The 100** to air on E4 in the **UK**
- Studio Ghibli legend **Hayao Miyazaki** to **retire** after the release of *The Wind Rises*

- Original *Star Wars* cinematographer **Gilbert Taylor** passes away at the age of 99
- **Despicable Me 2** is 2013's **highest grossing** film at the UK box office so far
- Joe Abercrombie, Juliet E McKenna and Adrian Tchaikovsky among authors contributing stories to **Legends**, an anthology dedicated to the late **David Gemmell**
- Wigan Warriors and Leeds Rhinos wear **Man Of Steel** logo on shirts in rugby league match
- Flop Bob Hoskins-starring **Super Mario Bros** movie to get **comic book** sequel

DON'T QUOTE ME

"Holy shit... BEN AFFLECK IS THE NEW BATMAN!!! Do you know what this means? It means that I've seen Batman naked!!!"

Kevin Smith tweets the most important observation so far about the new Caped Crusader.

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STAR WATCH

News from a galaxy far, far away

Revenge Of The Sith's digital overload will be forgotten.

With *Star Wars* now part of the Disney fold, most of the known universe was waiting for some *Episode VII* news to emerge from the Mouse House's biennial D23 Expo in California. But even as the studio spilled beans on the rest of its upcoming slate, they remained strangely tight-lipped about their lucrative new toy – Disney Studios chairman Alan Horn even told fans, "I wish I could tell you more, but it will come soon."

Thankfully it's not been a totally fallow month on the *Star Wars* gossip front. In arguably the most talked about cinematography news ever, JJ Abrams' regular director of photography Dan Mindel has confirmed that *Episode VII* will be lensed on 35mm film. Why's that a big deal? Well, *Attack Of The Clones* and *Revenge Of The Sith* blazed a trail for shooting on digital, so the return to film looks like a declaration of an intent to make the movies feel more "real" – especially coming after Lucasfilm boss Kathleen Kennedy had said that they'll be using proper locations and practical effects where possible. It also suggests that the film's inevitable 3D will be a conversion from "flat" images – the approach Abrams took on *Star Trek Into Darkness*.

Less concrete – but no less intriguing – is the rumour running on various websites that *Episode VII*'s release will be pushed back from summer 2015 to December. It would be a break from *Star Wars*' traditional May release slot, but would seem a logical decision. Never has a summer looked more crowded than 2015's, with new *Avengers*, *Superman/Batman*, *Pirates Of the Caribbean*, *Independence Day* and *Terminator* movies all due. And with *The Hobbit* trilogy done and dusted by then, the end of the year's looking pretty quiet. Besides, it'll give JJ more time to make sure the Force really is with this one. SFX

NICK SETCHFIELD'S

DEVELOPMENT HELL

Your monthly glimpse into Hollywood's hoped-for future

PANDORA OVERLOAD!
AVATAR 2, 3 & 4

Down in Mississippi they call him Howlin' Jim Cameron. Why? Well, maybe it's because he done gone got the blues, more blues than any man can bear, and then a whole mess more. Yes, **James Cameron**'s future seems inextricably bound to the inhabitants of Pandora. He's just declared that *Avatar* is now earning no less than three sequels, and has enlisted screenwriters **Josh Friedman** (*War Of The Worlds*), **Rick Jaffa** and **Amanda Silver** (*Rise Of The Planet Of The Apes*) and **Shane Salerno** (*Savages*) to bring his clearly sanity-threatening obsession to cinematic life. "In writing the new films I've come to realise that *Avatar*'s world, story and characters have become even richer than I anticipated, and it became apparent that two films would not be enough to capture everything I wanted to put on screen." Look for *Avatar 2* in December 2016, unless someone stages an intervention first.

ULTRON-VIOLENCE!
THE AVENGERS – AGE OF ULTRON

Joss Whedon promises a grounded take on Ultron, the snarly cyber-nemesis pitched against Marvel's all-stars in the *Avengers* sequel. Rest assured, though – the angriest AI in the universe will be just as bent on herocide as his comic book counterpart. "As a character, I love him because he's so pissed off," Whedon tells *Entertainment Weekly*. "I knew right away what I wanted to do with him. He's always trying to destroy the Avengers, goddamn it. He's got a bee in his bonnet. He's not a happy guy, which means he's an interesting guy. He's got pain. And the way that manifests is not going to be standard robot stuff. So we'll take away some of those powers because at some point everybody becomes magic, and I already have someone who's a witch." And that, of course, is longtime comic book team-player the Scarlet Witch, with indie fave

TO THE BATFLECK!
BATMAN VS SUPERMAN

So now we know: the internet melts at the exact temperature of Affleck degrees fahrenheit. Yes, Ben Affleck is the chin of choice for Warner Bros' superpowered title bout and word is he's signed for a sweet multi-picture, multi-cape deal. Looks like we'll be waiting just that little bit longer for *Gigli 2: Armed And Dangerous*. "Ben provides an interesting counterbalance to Henry's Superman," says helmer **Zack Snyder**. "He has the acting chops to create a layered portrayal of a man who is older and wiser than Clark Kent and bears the scars of a seasoned crime fighter, but retain the charm that the world sees in billionaire Bruce Wayne." Frontrunner for villain of the piece is *Breaking Bad*'s crystal meth king **Bryan Cranston**, who teases "I like Lex Luthor. I think he's misunderstood. He's a loveable, sweet man."

ILLUSTRATION BY PAUL CEMMICK

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Elizabeth Olsen orbiting the role of the hex-hurling sorceress.

LIVE AND LET SMIRK! BOND 24

Q Branch may have a depressingly sniffy attitude toward the joy of the exploding pen these days but 007's next mission may find him armed with the very latest in wry smirks and ironic detachment. Now happily established as a crystal-eyed, purse-lipped killing machine, **Daniel Craig** is keen to reclaim the ejector seat in James Bond's soul. "Hopefully we'll retain some of the old irony," he tells *Vulture Magazine*, "and make sure it doesn't become pastiche." Not that he's itching to go full-bore Roger Moore. "I can't do schtick. I'm not very good at it. Unless it kind of suddenly makes sense. Does that make sense?" Did that amphibious gondola in *Moonraker* make sense? *Skyfall*'s **Sam Mendes** returns to direct the 24th Bondbuster, targeting a November 2015 release.

BRAINZZZZZZ... NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD: ORIGINS 3D

Sometimes we glimpse the future, and it's a brain-blinding flash of utter horror: a relentless zombie army of *Night Of The Living Dead* remakes, clawing their way out of the earth. Here's the latest – the 47th, by our carefully exaggerated calculations. Directed by **Zebediah De Soto**, it's pitched as "a new take on Romero's 1968 original... the story of a group of survivors fighting to stay alive when a mysterious plague unleashes the undead." If the plot's yawnsomely overfamiliar the filmmakers at least promise a new visual approach – it'll be shot in 3D using computer generated backgrounds and motion capture tech to create "a hybrid of graphic novel and traditional animation". Oh, and it'll star Bollywood's **R Madhavan**, which leaves us hoping for a crazy dance number at least.

VIN THE ARMY NOW! SOLDIERS OF THE SUN

Vin Diesel is franchise hungry. Not content with the regular adrenaline rushes of the *Fast And Furious* saga, resurrecting Riddick in, uh, *Riddick* and that rumoured recall to extreme action duty in *xXx: The Return Of Xander Cage*, he's now hoping for a new big-screen banker. Set in a post-apocalyptic future – keep those surprises coming, Hollywood! – it sounds like a mash between *Indiana Jones* and *Predator*. On a mission in Mexico on a quest for a fabled city of gold, a squad of troopers confront an extra-terrestrial menace known as Orcs. Update: a mash between *Indiana Jones* and *Predator* and *Lord Of The Rings*. Gotcha. Studio Universal want another "ensemble franchise", apparently. So, wait, that's a mash between *Indiana Jones*, *Predator*, *Lord Of The Rings* and *Fast And Furious*. This is dizzying.

NEXT STOP... THE TWILIGHT ZONE

Oblivion helmer **Joseph Kosinski** is the latest name attached to the cinematic resurrection of Rod Serling's TV classic. And there's a new screenwriter, too: **Aron Eli Coleite**, whose **credits** include *Crossing Jordan* and *Heroes*. Coleite will abandon the anthology approach, favouring a single story that may, just may, interweave iconic echoes of the original show. So that's William Shatner discovering a robot grandmother on the wing of a ghost plane heading to Las Vegas – only it's not Vegas, it's Hell, and he's the Devil, and his glasses are smashed by a living mannequin in a post-apocalyptic alien zoo that's really a dream of a lost childhood summer where Mr Serling's standing in the doorway, having a fag, in the designated smoking area known as... *The Twilight Zone*.

THE WICKER THREE! WRATH OF THE GODS

Ah, Edward Woodward, dragged to your doom by arson-crazed cultists... if only you'd known it was merely the beginning. Turns out *Wicker Man* guru **Robin Hardy** is plotting a new film to follow 2011's *The Wicker Tree* and cap an entire pagan-flavoured trilogy. "I am just at the opening stages of financing it and hope to make it next year," the writer-director tells *Screen Daily*. Intriguingly, he promises to conclude the saga in a potentially more cosmic manner. "The first two films are all [about] offers to the gods. The third film is about the gods." Anyone else just hear the *Prometheus* klaxon go off?

"The first two *Wicker Man* films are all about offers to the gods. The third film is about the gods"

ALSO BURNING

Zhang Ziyi returning for *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon – The Green Destiny*... *Pirates 5* titled *Pirates Of The Caribbean: Dead Men Tell No Tales*... **Samuel L Jackson** joining **Matthew Vaughn's** *The Secret Service*... Chinese star **Wang Leehom** joining big screen adap of **Stan Lee**'s supersoldier tale *Annihilator*... Sony adapting **Thomas Sweterlitsch**'s post-apocalyptic novel *Tomorrow And Tomorrow*... *Erin Brockovich* writer **Susannah Grant** adapting **Rick Yancey**'s YA alien invasion tale *The 5th Wave* for Sony... **Sam Rockwell** in the frame for the *Poltergeist* remake... *The Conjuring 2* rumoured to tell the tale of possessed sisters... **Tarsem Singh** helming end of the world thriller *The Panopticon*... **Hugh Grant** joing **Guy Ritchie**'s *The Man From UNCLE*... *Elysium* helmer **Neill Blomkamp** reteaming with **Sharlto Copley** for robot meets gangsters tale *Chappie*... *The Wolverine*'s **Scott Frank** rewriting *Assassin's Creed* script for Ubisoft Motion Pictures, with **Michael Fassbender** in line to star... MGM developing robot serial killer tale *Abe*... **DJ Caruso** still onboard *Preacher*... Universal adapting vampire-themed comic book *Day Men*... **Hayley Atwell** joining **Kenneth Branagh**'s *Cinderella*... **Benedict Cumberbatch** out of **Guillermo del Toro**'s *Crimson Peak*...

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NEXT MONTH!

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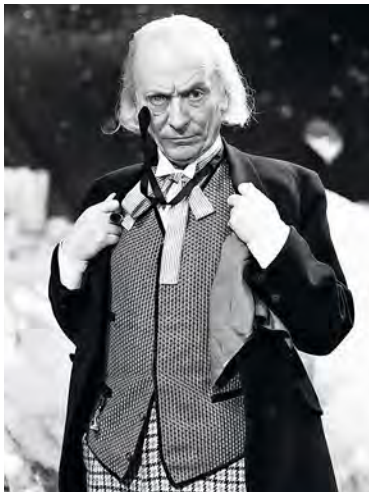

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All contents subject to change. Just like Miley Cyrus. She's changed. Now she's twerking and waving a foam finger. You can't cage Miley, you squares! (Head online to **www.sfx.co.uk** to see what actually made the issue.)

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Take A Dump

David Langford is overloaded by information

- SF writer David Langford has had a column in *SFX* since issue one.
- David won his first SF award – the Nova for Best British Fanzine – for *Twll-Ddu*, way back in 1977. He has received 28 Hugo Awards throughout his career.
- His celebrated SF newsletter can be found at http://news.ansible.co.uk.

ILLUSTRATION BY ANDY WATT

The space opera begins with pages of coruscating laser beams, ravening energies, vaporised starships and exploding suns. Great narrative hook, but why all this strife? Pausing his interstellar dogfight, our author inserts a hefty essay on recent galactic politics: "Twenty years ago, the ships of the Federation..." Welcome to the infamous infodump.

Maybe our writer has what she fondly believes is a new hyperspace travel gimmick. Her characters are all familiar with this but it's shoehorned into dialogue anyway: "Remind me, Professor, as though I knew nothing of it, just how the Transfinite Implausibility Woofdrive functions?" Like interrupting a thriller car-chase for a lecture on internal combustion engines.

SF infodumps have a long, sleazy history. One pioneer was Hugo "Award" Gernsback, whose *Ralph 124C41+* (1911-12) explains high-tech future transport at length *with diagrams*: "'You will understand it better by examining this chart,' and unfolding a plan, he proceeded to elaborate on the finer points of tube construction."

A personal favourite is Mack Reynolds's *Lagrange Five*, with repeated infodumps about a dread super-claustrophobia which doesn't affect astronauts in their roomy capsules but can strike with crippling force when you're cooped up in several cubic miles of space colony. Victims carefully list the synonyms: "I've got Island fever. I've got Wide Syndrome. I've got ... space cafard." Likewise doctors: "'Space cafard,' he muttered. 'So-called Island fever. Sometimes it's named Wide Syndrome.'" Our doctor then helpfully lectures a nurse, who knows all about it, on the subject of space cafard. At last the hero arrives and just for our benefit asks: "What's space cafard?" So help me, they tell him. Again.

Similarly, Anne McCaffrey's cast rehashes its common knowledge in *The Tower And The Hive*: "Had the Hivers but known they had met their match in Jeff Raven and Angharad Gwyn aka the Rowan as partners, they might have quit while they were ahead." (This chap is talking about his own grandparents. Love that "aka".) "And that, of course, brought the entire FT&T organization in at the time of the Deneb Penetration with the Rowan as the focus for the Mind Merge that helped Jeff Raven despatch the Hiver Scouts trying to depopulate his world." Too much information!

But infodumps aren't necessarily bad. Some easily led people take the writing-workshop advice "Show not tell" as unassailable holy writ, but it's more a guideline. Alfred Bester's

It explains high-tech future transport *with diagrams*

scene-setting introduction to *The Stars My Destination* is a brilliant, pyrotechnic infodump. Whole chapters of lyrical data-dumping feature in John Brunner's *Stand On Zanzibar* and Kim Stanley Robinson's *2312*. Neal Stephenson's colossal *Anathem* is arguably all infodump, on physics, Platonic philosophy and more – but still a compulsive read despite what Adam Roberts called the annoylogisms.

For a word that seems to have been around forever, the origins of "infodump" are hazy. The *Oxford English Dictionary* SF website offers nothing earlier than a 1987 Usenet conversation, and Jeff Prucher's spin-off book *Brave New Words* credits Howard Waldrop as first to use it in print, in 1990. That's clearly wrong: "info-dump" is defined as "The incompetent writer's way of revealing the details of his story's setting" in KW Jeter's novel *Dr Adder*, written 1972 and published 1984. Jeter says the term comes from a book review in an old SF magazine, but which one? Research continues. If you find a pre-1984 or, better, pre-1972 appearance, there may be a small prize. SFX

David Langford must remind you at length, as though you knew nothing of it, that he writes a column for SFX.

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Electric Friends

Bonnie Burton considers the potential for robot companions

- Our columnist Bonnie Burton, a San Francisco-based author, has written a number of books including her latest – *The Star Wars Craft Book*.
- Bonnie appears on the massive "Geek & Sundry" and "Stan Lee's World Of Heroes" YouTube channels.
- More of her writing can be found at Grrl.com.

Your boss is a tyrant. Your mum is disappointed you haven't supplied her with grandchildren. And your lack of a social life would make for a great emo ballad. But alas, when you return home from a depressing day of unlucky endeavours, your flatmates would rather not hear your endless whingeing. However, the future may give you a new best mate who'll sit and listen to all your problems without a single, sarcastic eye roll. Or will at least look at you with an understanding gaze powered by batteries and the best robotics Japan has to offer.

Yes, in August of this year, Japan sent a talking robot called "Kirobo" to the International Space Station to keep lonely astronauts company. The Kibo Robot project is a collaboration between Robo Garage, Toyota, Dentsu and the University of Tokyo. The conversational robot will carry on chats with astronauts and scientists for 18 months to help improve its voice recognition and interaction skills.

As any sci-fi fan can tell you, having a robot on board your spaceship with enough AI to carry on a decent conversation is crucial. *Red Dwarf* is a perfect example of how robots can keep a crew's spirits up. Though Kryten 2X4B-523P was inevitably treated like an android butler, he proves to be a trustworthy friend. (The on-board computer Holly and even the inane Talkie Toaster also become much-needed artificial friends.)

Not all on-board robots make for great listeners, though. Marvin the Paranoid Android in *The Hitchhiker's Guide To The Galaxy* does nothing but worry and whine. And C-3PO from *Star Wars* is so loose with laments you have to wonder if the C in his name really stood for Complaining.

The closest representation of the ideal android to have as a bestie in space would be Lt Commander Data from *Star Trek: The Next Generation*. It might take him a while to understand the punchlines of your jokes, but at least he makes an effort. He's not only intelligent, but he's curious to learn more about human behaviour. Perhaps, not so shockingly, Data became a sort of sci-fi sex symbol amongst female *Star Trek* fans. I know I had a crush on the guy. He was sweet and innocent. Plus he was fully functioning when it came to romantic encounters (just ask Tasha Yar)...

Data at times acted more human than his actual human counterparts. But he also had a scientific detachment that made him intriguing. Yet with all his quirky mannerisms he was a damn good listener. Think of all the episodes where Data had to listen to teenage Wesley Crusher complain that no one took him seriously. Or listen to Geordi La Forge yell about a malfunctioning warp drive. Or listen to Captain Picard moan about Q screwing up their mission for the umpteenth time. Only a patient android could withstand that level of constant grumbling without turning into an insane killer like Ash from *Alien*. So to be honest, Data is my idea of the perfect boyfriend. He's smart, he's cute – in a shiny Goth kind of way – he's good with pets and he can listen to grumbles for days without giving you that "please shut up already" look.

Data is my idea of the perfect boyfriend – he's smart and cute

Sadly, most anthropomorphic robots available today look like Daft Punk wannabes (ASIMO) or klutzy old-fashioned Cylons (TOPIO). Or worse the robots that most look like humans – albeit animatronic wax sculptures – fall into the unsettling Uncanny Valley zone. These robots might walk, talk, dance in unison and even play ping-pong, but very few of them can hold a conversation long enough to feel like you are genuinely being understood. Perhaps with the latest Japanese astronaut companion Kirobo we'll get closer to an android that can feel more like a friend than a radio-controlled toy. SFX

Bonnie will settle for a robot that can walk her dog and make a decent martini.

ILLUSTRATION BY MARIA COLINO

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THIS MONTH'S LETTERS COMPILED BY
Nick Setchfield, Features Editor

Anyone doubting *Doctor Who*'s status as a true global phenomenon should see our inbox. Peter Capaldi's casting brought us comments from Australia to Estonia, Mississippi to Paraguay, Malaysia to Nassau. We ignored the ones from Skaro, though. Nutters, the lot of 'em.

WRITE IN AND WIN!

Primitives – cast your gaze to the heavens and behold the glittering sky-barges of those godlike alien entities from The Black Library! Watch as they bestow pure literary joy upon the writer of our Star Letter! We could weep at the cosmic magnificence of it all. This month's haul includes **Master Of Dragons** by Chris Wraight, **The Great Betrayal** by Nick Kyme, **Classics: First And Only** by Dan Abnett, **Classics: Nightbringer** by Graham McNeill and **Classics: Trollslayer** by William King. Write us a winning letter and you too could be touched by the star-gods!

HOT TOPIC! THE TWELFTH DOCTOR

That Capaldi is an excellent actor isn't in doubt and I have no qualms about him being able to master the role, and bring something new and unique to the character, but to discover that he's been a lifelong fan is just icing on the cake. Here's an actor who really understands what the Doctor should be. Eccleston always seemed to be a great actor playing a role very well, but playing the Doctor needs that little bit of extra understanding and love for the character.

Tao J Brown, Cambridge

We can now get back to the Doctor as the wayward cool uncle that got into trouble and would show you more of the world than your parents would have liked, but still looked after you.

That's what Old *Who* was, a chaperoned gateway to harder science fiction, political thrillers or horror for the young or young at heart. There was always a taste of harder topics but the Doctor always knew, and cared, enough to keep it all in check. That was the charm and it's something we can go back to.

The fangirls will find some other totty to squee over, though we can hope that some picked up on the real charm of the Doctor and may stay long enough to let Mr Capaldi become their Doctor.

Paul McGorry

There's been altogether too much fangirl-bashing over this news. The show belongs to them as much as anyone. And I'm yet to be convinced they've all set the controls for Planet Shallow...

My inner fangirl did have a moment of sorrow over Capaldi's age and appearance, and I had to beat her into shape with the prospect of some fine acting and a little more substance. We all have our moments. I think for the majority of younger *Who* fans the choice isn't a popular one, though. I had one younger friend inform me she hoped he was "Killed off quick", not because she knew him, but because she found him unattractive. I look at it this way; if I were the Doctor's companion, I wouldn't just bail ship because he regenerated in a form I found physically unappealing, now would I?

Christina House ↔

All the kids will soon be doing the funny finger thing.

STAR LETTER

IMAGINE THERE'S NO DOCTOR

I've hit upon the perfect casting choice for the Thirteenth Doctor: nobody! That's right, they shouldn't cast anyone to play the role of the next Doctor. Instead, the companions and supporting cast should all play to empty air as if the Doctor was actually there. That way, the viewer gets to use their imagination to fill the empty space with whatever they think the Doctor should look, sound and act like. It's perfect! Everyone will get to see exactly what they want, and there'll be no complaining from even the most rabid of fans.

Even better, in 50 years or so it might even be possible for the fan community to come together and actually decide who the Thirteenth Doctor should have been, using the twin benefits of hindsight and having known better than the production team anyway. And using the miracles of future technology they'll be able to insert this Doctor into the footage of nothing but empty space. It's perfect! And if it doesn't satisfy the hardcore fans' overblown sense of entitlement, nothing will!

The Llama God, Not Actually Talking to Himself in the Dark Ford of the Chandlers

Crazy. But it could just work...

YOUR SFX CONTENTS ▸ 34 ASK THE SFXPERTS ▸ 35 VIDEOLINK ▸ 36 SOAPBOX ▸ 38 CONVENTIONS ▸ 40 QUIZ

ask the SFXperts

If you can't remember it, we can! Your sci-fi problems solved...

WILD WILD WEST

Q Can you tell me the name of a film, probably late '70s, which initially looked like a Western but turned out to be an early virtual reality thingy? If you got killed as a cowboy you ended up lobotomised, and I recall at the end the hero rode off into the sunset having been killed and reinstated somehow.

Richard Stanton, email

JORDAN FARLEY SAYS:

This can only be 1977's *Welcome To Blood City*, starring Western icon Jack Palance and *2001*'s Keir Dullea. The pair are amongst a group of five strangers who wake up in an Old West town where the only options are to kill and become a citizen, or live as a slave. The SF "twist" (given away bizarrely early) is that they're all part of some virtual reality experiment, though it's never adequately explained what the experiment is even for. It's never had a DVD release, but it's a bit pants anyway. Classic *Prisoner* ep "Living In Harmony" did a much better job with a similar concept.

KNIGHT FEVER

Q I have been having trouble trying to remember the name of a book. The main points are some kids on a council estate playing football. One of them kicks the ball through the church window so they break in to go and get it. When they are in the church they find a door to a fantasy world.

Matt Knight, email

GUEST SFXPERT LINDA STEERS SAYS:

This sounds like *Elidor* by Alan Garner. The four Watson children are trying to find their ball in a bombed-out church when they meet a man who is a king in a mythological world. He asks the children to look after the treasures, bury them safely where they won't be found by the evil that is ripping Elidor apart. Many of his books are based around British mythology – like *The Owl Service* – and this contains elements of Welsh, English and Irish stories.

TIME LORDS

Q I am looking for a short story, set in the seconds before a nuclear war destroys the planet, where the hero encounters aliens who know what is about to happen and are busy removing all the Earth's precious cultural legacy before it gets destroyed.

Mike Irlandais, email

DAVID LANGFORD SAYS:

This is most probably Arthur C Clarke's "All the Time in the World" (July 1951, *Startling Stories*). The visitors are time travellers from the far future; the antihero helps them in exchange for one of their time-stasis gadgets, which will make him master of the world. Of course the punchline is his discovery that this is the day of the super-bomb test, and Earth has only seconds left...

Send us questions at **sfxperts@futurenet.co.uk**. Want to be a guest SFXpert? Head to **www.sfx.co.uk/SFXperts** to see a list of unanswered questions.

Capaldi is a brilliant actor. Having seen him live on stage in *The Ladykillers* and on the small and big screens, the man is capable of perfectly timed riotous comedy and hauntingly dark drama soaked in sincerity.

However, all these qualities alone do not a Doctor make; rather it is Peter's sheer control of his physicality, his stage presence, his gravitas as an actor that will make him the space travelling Lord of Time we have come to know and love as the Doctor.

Richard Jacquard

Wish I'd had shares in the word gravitas this month...

Peter Capaldi by fan artist Stephen Byrne (http://on.fb.me/16CNdZU).

Peter Capaldi is a fantastic choice. I think he will bring a real gravitas to the role, maybe giving us an edgier Doctor that'll show us why this man is so feared by his enemies throughout the universe.

I am hoping to see a Doctor that lives up to other names given to him in the past such as The Destroyer Of Worlds, The Lonely God, The Oncoming Storm. I want to see a Doctor that can be charming one moment and scary the next. I think Peter will be able to show us someone who is largely benevolent but not someone you'd want to get on the wrong side of.

Ian Ponsford

Was Malcolm Tucker known as The Oncoming F-Bomb?

More striking than handsome, as sinister as Matt Smith was bouncy, he is just what the series needs, as the Doctor heads towards Trenzalore and a darker, edgier *Doctor Who*.

Also, it has always been strange to me that the Doctor, at about 1,000 years old, should look like the still absolutely delicious David Tennant or like Matt Smith.

Pauline Wong, Malaysia

I'm relieved the new Doctor is Peter Capaldi. The best thing about Doctor Who was that he was always just slightly out of your range, like a schoolteacher that you're just too young to befriend. Although I will miss Matt Smith's Doctor, my personal favourite out of the eleven, I can't wait to get into this new guy. Our new Doctor looks the part and, thankfully, seems unkissable.

Frank Altomari

Unkissable? This may be news to Mrs Capaldi...

I was a kid when Hartnell hit the screen in 1963 and the alien, stern old man unnerved me as much as the monsters he confronted weekly. We are in danger of

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TALES OF WAR FROM THE GRIM DARKNESS OF THE FAR FUTURE
blacklibrary.com

Zombies just like me or you: *The Returned.*

TRES BIEN ZOMBIES

Les Revenants l'une des meilleures expositions que j'ai vues depuis perdu. Sinistre, étrange, dramatique et atmosphérique, c'était un grand televison, qui était bien plus remarquable parce qu'il était français.

Steven Morrish, Petworth

Pardon our French.

"This helps secure the Doctor's future"

forgetting too readily that *Who* is not a clone of some safe sitcom for metropolitan twenty-somethings, many of which we can see any day of any week on TV. Capaldi will speak to the younger-than-twelves like no other Doctor has for generations. This helps secure the Doctor's future for years to come.

Paul Hammans, Cambridge

I think PC is a great choice for the new Doctor, but I can't help thinking that they have missed an (equal) opportunity...

Mikael Costello

His age, to me, is the biggest factor. The series started with older Doctors and went to younger ones. I can understand why. The younger Doctors were capable of more physical acting, more dramatic movement – more running, if you will. Capaldi's age, and the drawbacks of it, will change the tone of the stories to a less physical, more cerebral, tone. An older Doctor will look more like a sage and change the role of the companion.

Fifty years is a turning point in this series, deciding whether it will be as relevant in the future as it was in the past. Selecting younger doctors from 2005 until now was, I felt, a good choice. It showed that the show could remain vibrant and had a future of maybe another 50 years. This choice just makes me ↪

THIS MONTH IN SCI-FI HISTORY

SFX 176 December 2008

5 YEARS AGO

We celebrate 45 years of *Doctor Who* with Stephen Fry, Mark Gatiss, Clive Barker, Steven Moffat and more.

SFX 111 December 2003

10 YEARS AGO

The latest from *Matrix Revolutions*, art from *Clone Wars*, and announcing the start of *Dead Like Me*.

SFX 45 December 1998

15 YEARS AGO

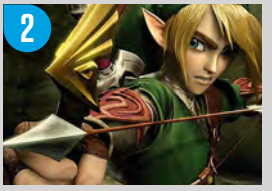
Sixty years on, we dispel some of the myths surrounding the broadcast of HG Wells's *The War Of The Worlds*.

VIDEOLINK The best of YouTube and beyond

Anime Who

http://bit.ly/Whoanime

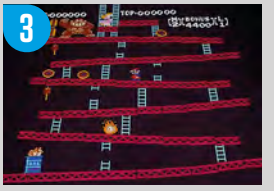
This barmy *Doctor Who* anime features a creepy number Eleven, a screeching Amy Pond and a bunch of the Doctor's greatest foes. If anything, it made us glad there isn't a real *Doctor Who* anime.



Almost Zelda

http://bit.ly/Zeldapitch

Computer animation studio Imagi created this pitch reel for a CGI *Legend Of Zelda* movie in 2007, but Nintendo turned them down. Though accomplished there's a lack of character and charm.



Kong Motion

http://bit.ly/Kongmotion

What would you do if your prized *Donkey Kong* cartridge bit the dust? One man decided to make his own stopmotion version using a black cloth, some editing software and lots of hand-made sprites. Fab.

Last in 60 Seconds

http://bit.ly/Lastin60seconds

Somehow this *South Park*-style short has managed to compress *The Last Of Us*'s epic 17-hour story into 60 seconds, and in an entertaining fashion to boot. Keep your eyes peeled throughout for Easter eggs.

Venom on Film

http://bit.ly/Venomonfilm

Still smarting from Venom's appearance in *Spider-Man 3*? This super-cool, *Man Bites Dog*-aping short starring *True Blood*'s Ryan Kwanten as Eddie Brock should help. Stick round for the cameo at the end.

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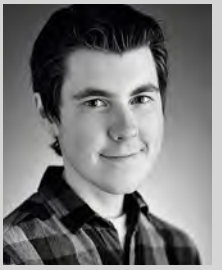
SOAPBOX
ANGRY SFX WRITERS SPOUT OFF



Jordan Farley celebrates videogames as a storytelling medium

Even as an evangelist for narrative-driven videogames, here's something I didn't expect to be saying quite so soon: the three best stories I've sat through this year have all played out with a pad in my hands.

The Last Of Us, *Bioshock Infinite* and *Tomb Raider* have thrilled me in a way that the silver screen's biggest summer blockbusters haven't even come close to matching. They've tugged at my heartstrings more than the best character-driven drama the telly has to offer. And they've built better worlds than anything I've consumed on the printed page.

Emotion is a key ingredient in all three. Videogames have always had the potential to create profound attachments to their characters but it's only recently that games have capitalised on the possibility. Writing, voice acting and facial animations have reached a level that total immersion is no longer an obstacle between you and the story. Lara Croft is a good example of gaming's recent leaps and bounds evolution. Between 1996 and 2008 she was defined by triangle boobs and hotpants. In 2013 she's a reluctant survivor.

What these three also have in common is that they never forget they're games. For all its wonderful character work, *The Last Of Us* has you scrounging for magic scrap. *Tomb Raider* sees Lara tearful over the first deer she kills, only to encourage the player to hunt further animals for upgrades. While *Bioshock Infinite*'s smarts make the hours spent rooting through bins for health-providing hot dogs seem even sillier. And they all require a basic level of ability, even on the easiest setting.

While I'd love to urge everyone to play more games

"They've built better worlds than many books"

I realise these are barriers to entry that other mediums don't share, along with more universal problems: time and money. A good starting point in that case is Telltale's brilliant *Walking Dead* adventure game. It can be downloaded on PC, consoles or iDevice for as little as a tenner and requires nothing more than a few clicks every so often, but is one of the best examples of just how palm-sweatingly powerful storytelling in games has become.

Lara Croft's survival matters these days.

wonder whether, like the actor chosen as the Twelfth Doctor, it has become older and more "tired", less likely to survive.

Chris Bogart, New Jersey, USA

It wasn't all Capaldimania in the inbox, mind...

DOES JIM CARREY?

Re: Jim Carrey. I am a great believer that one can change one's thoughts and opinions. I therefore believe Jim has a right to do as he wishes with regards to promoting, or not, *Kick-Ass 2*. It is honourable and moral for him to stand up for what he believes.

What would be immoral and hypocritical would be for him to make money off something which he is opposed to. He should therefore, in my opinion, donate any money he makes from this movie to charity.

Mark Longdon

Good point, Mark – and maybe he already has. He may just choose not to shout about it...

DINOSAURS & NAZIS

I enjoyed Luke Dormehl's Time Machine article on *Jurassic Park* but he didn't mention the single most astonishing fact I remember hearing about the movie's production. Spielberg was editing his dinosaur adventure in between shooting scenes for *Schindler's List*.

The ability to spend a couple of hours focused on creating a fun action movie about folk running around brontosauruses and then directing the cold horror of death in the Warsaw ghetto before lunch is remarkable. Staying sane doing it even more so.

Rob Smith, Adelaide, Australia

See you next issue! SFX

WAHF
WE ALSO HEARD FROM

MudCrab ("I am the most excited about a new Doctor I have ever been!"); **Tyler English** ("What will all those 'nerd' girls do without a Matt Smith or a Tennant to drool over?"); **Andrew Poole** (thinks the change in formula is "a good move"); **MD Doornkamp** (who taught us the Dutch for "Very big yuck"); **Steve Lam** ("Moffat, you should have chosen Matt Smith with his shaved head as the Twelfth Doctor"); **Teena Le** ("Everyone who is giving up on *Doctor Who* just because the new Doctor is not a fresh-faced, hot young guy was obviously watching the show for the wrong reason"); **Mike Yenco** (wants Romana back); **Arlie B Zachary** ("It's going to be a wild ride, just like every other Doctor that came before"); **Colin Hill** ("Perhaps it's time to bring something a little more edgy back to *Who*"); **Neil Clitheroe** ("RESULT!"); **Luke Traynor** ("*Doctor Who And The Lair Of The White Worm*! Sadly too late for Ken Russell to direct an episode..."); **Doug Sims** ("Can't wait to see his spin on this role"); **Rob M** (wants Capaldi to have "a decent streak of dark humour"); **Leighanne Wiegand** ("I'm just mad he's not ginger. But since he's Scottish, it makes up for it"); **Ruth Jimenez** (thanks for the sweary haiku); **Lia Oxanne** ("genuinely excited for him taking over the TARDIS!"); **Sandy Barnard** ("Peter Capaldi is absolutely gorgeous for a 55-year-old man"); **Mariah Carlson** ("He has the perfect look for it"); **Mark Reynolds** (wants Capaldi's catchphrase to be "Banzaaaaiiiiii!"); **Jim Taylor** ("We are guaranteed a memorable, mesmeric Doctor"); **Simon Druce** ("Are Croup and Vandemar going to be companions?"); **RP McCartney** (all he is saying is "Give Pete a chance..."); and many, many, *many* more...

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3/10/13 - 6/10/13

GRIMMFEST

MANCHESTER'S INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL OF HORROR AND CULT FILMS

*Please note: This is an advertorial

Grimmfest celebrates its fifth anniversary this year, as the event makes a welcome return to Manchester on 3rd – 6th October. The UK's largest up and coming genre festival is set to be even more ambitious and impressive this time round.

Set primarily within the Gothic surroundings of The Dancehouse Theatre, fans will be treated to several days of exclusive previews, live Q&A sessions, signings, competitions and other surprises. This year also sees the festival expand and include fringe screenings at the Lass O'Gowrie.

This intimate and friendly event allows for a rare and genuine community atmosphere, with fans, actors, authors and filmmakers alike mingling between shows. All of this joviality serves to balance out the horrific events which take place onscreen once the doors are shut and the lights go down, for Grimmfest pulls no punches when it comes to showing the finest and most boundary pushing horror out there.

On Air

One of the most exciting things about Grimmfest is the sheer amount of scope which they give to the independent scene, fully embracing the plethora of talent that exists both on these shores and beyond. A true champion of the underdog, their focus on indie films means it is absolutely guaranteed that some amazing discoveries will be made over the course of the festival.

This year will see a number of Premieres, including the first English screening of the highly anticipated ***Jug Face***, which recently received extensive and enthusiastic coverage in Fangoria Magazine. Also being showcased at the festival this year is the European premiere of slick German thriller ***On Air*** and the UK premiere of serial killer flick, ***Found***. The festival also sees Robin Hardy's newly remastered, Final Cut of his seminal piece ***The Wicker Man*** screen to commemorate the 40th anniversary of its UK release.

Jugface

One of the hits of Grimmfest 2012 was Dominic Brunt and Joanne Mitchell's ***Before Dawn***. Brunt returns to the festival this year with his new short film, ***Shellshocked***, an unsettling wartime horror making its first appearance on a Northern screen. ***Him Indoors*** director Paul Davis will also be present, screening his new film ***The Body***. The star of the latter, Alfie Allen, who made a remarkable performance in ***Game of Thrones***, shall venture north of the wall to be in attendance. With more guests in store, this is merely the tip of the iceberg.

To coincide with a special screening of ***Hellraiser***, the Chatterer Cenobite himself, Nicholas Vince, will be there. Vince is the author of the stunning short story, collection, ***What Monsters Do***. He will bejoined by fellow horror scribes Wayne Simmons, author of the bestselling ***Flu*** series, as well as the upcoming ***Plastic Jesus***, and Sam Stone, author of ***Zombies at Tiffany's***.

Found

SFX enthusiasts will certainly want to make a note of this event, for the Oscar winning Special Effects Artists Mark Coulier and Shaune Harrison will both be attending as honoured guests. Between them, they have worked extensively on the ***Alien***, ***Harry Potter*** and ***Star Wars*** franchises, as well as ***World War Z***, ***Grabbers***, ***Captain America*** and many more. Harrison was the recent subject of an extensive interview in Diabolique Magazine, in relation to his FX work on 2012's ***Grabbers***.

Located in central Manchester, a short walk away from the bustling nightlife of one of the UK's most vibrant cities, Grimmfest is not just a festival; it's a celebration of genre cinema at its finest.

Colin McCracken
Editor at zombiehamster.com

All announcements correct at the time of going to print.

Movies may be subject to change at the distributor's discretion and guest appearances aresubject to work commitments.

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Event Horizon

Because meeting up is every fan's right

Robert Llewellyn could not explain the darkness that surrounded him.

Michaela Gray, Paul Cornell and Barry Nugent.

Author Emma Newman read from her latest book.

Over 100 guests were listed on the event's website. Over 1,500 people came to see them.

CON REPORT

Nine Worlds Geekfest

9–11 August, Renaissance and Radisson hotels, Heathrow

Dave Bradley joined a throng of authors and fans at the brand new London convention

LAUNCHED WITH A SUCCESSFUL Kickstarter as the first of a new breed of fan-run Geekfest events, Nine Worlds descended on West London in August, settling into two hotels that are familiar to some as previous Eastercon venues. One hotel was devoted almost exclusively to gaming (role-playing, board gaming, LARPing, take your pick) while the other held the main registration, dealer area and a diverse series of panel tracks.

Over 1,500 attendees could attend talks on anything from sexism in indie comics to the science of sleeping, as well as practical sessions like *Game Of Thrones* sigil design, a steampunk fashion show, autograph signings from the likes of Chris Barrie (the queues curiously quiet – the Nine Worlds crowd was not so into the signature hunting scene) and some wine-fuelled book launches.

"The best thing was Zombie Maths with Dr Thomas Woolley," claims Wendy Sims, there representing Geek Syndicate. "How best to avoid zombies using equations – the most fun I have had with maths." Author Gav Thorpe adds: "The most useful talk was Juliet Mushens and Den Patrick and their panel on agents. Though for most entertaining talk the award goes to Jack Cohen and his very professorial take on alien ecology and biology."

What struck immediately was how comfortable and flourishing Nine Worlds felt from the very first moment; perhaps a testament to how deftly organised it was, it did not feel like the new kid on the con block. "It had the feel of a well-established event, lacking the rough edges that might have been expected," agrees writer and editor Ian Whates. "At the same time, Nine Worlds had a subtly different vibe from other events. Many of those visiting my table in the dealers room admitted to being convention newbies. I can only give it a big thumbs-up, and I will certainly be returning."

If there was one apparent snag it was that there was just *too much* to do: so many activities were packed into the programme that items competed. "*The Skeptic Magazine* room was generally packed and the layout not conducive for overspill," reveals Thorpe, "But the biggest downside was having to make time for food by missing out on something, just because there was so much on the schedule."

Nonetheless, all concluded that it had been worthwhile, with Wendy Sims articulating what many felt by the end of the weekend: "I think it's going to be a yearly thing for us." The next Geekfest will take place on 8–10 August 2014. Visit **www.nineworlds.co.uk** for more information and ticket sales.

Photos: thanks to James Sims (@jsims1701) of GeekSyndicate.co.uk

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Definitely faces for radio.

DON'T MISS IT!

The Hitchhiker's Guide To The Galaxy Radio Show – Live!

14 September–30 November, nationwide

Don't miss your chance to hear a galaxy of genre stars voice sci-fi's best-known book

DOUGLAS ADAMS' *THE HITCHHIKER'S GUIDE TO THE GALAXY* has proved a uniquely malleable universe, with TV, silver screen, stage, literary and radio adaptations all proving successful. It's returning to its roots for the latest tour – a live radio show which will reunite the original cast alongside a special guest as the voice of the book.

Some names are still to be announced, but the list of confirmed guest stars so far include Anthony Daniels, Billy Boyd, Colin Baker and a plethora of TV personalities. For the full list of dates and guest stars, head to: **http://bit.ly/SFXHitchDates**.

The Radio Show has been adapted from Adams' novels and will be directed by Dirk Maggs (who recently adapted Neil Gaiman's *Neverwhere* for Radio 4). The show will tour across the country, with multiple opportunities to see most guest stars, but it's probably a good idea to book early. **www.hitchhikerslive.com**

DON'T MISS IT!

The Black Library Weekender II

2–3 November, Nottingham Belfry Hotel, Nottingham

Cecily Mumby looks forward to The Black Library's big weekend

THE BUZZING CITY OF NOTTINGHAM IS AGAIN TO play host to The Black Library Weekender. Only in its second year, this instalment promises to be bigger and more ambitious than the first event, which left attendees vowing to return for more of this two-day sci-fi and fantasy lit-fest.

Advertised as the ultimate weekend for fans of the *Warhammer* and *Warhammer 40,000* universes, the convention will feature an impressive host of authors and special guests. This event is a rare opportunity to attend book signings and seminars from some of the most prolific contributors to the genre. It will play host to an array of exclusive and never before seen content such as graphic novels, audio books and artwork that won't be available anywhere else for months. Among the guests who will be attending are Aaron Dembski-Bowden, Dan Abnett and Neil Roberts.

Last year tickets sold out in advance of the event. In order to get your hands on this year's tickets before they all go, head to the Black Library website, where passes are now on sale. **www.blacklibrary.com/events/weekender-2013.html**

28 Days Later

As the Sun disappears, console yourself with sci-fi

18 SEPTEMBER–16 OCTOBER

Staying In

- **Mondays** – **True Blood**'s sixth season finally lands in Blighty, courtesy of Fox, while **Under The Dome** continues on Channel 5, and **Do No Harm** shows on Watch.
- **Wednesdays** – **Supernatural** on Sky Living, while **The Almighty Johnsons** entertain on Syfy.
- **Thursdays** – **Haven**'s fourth season gets underway on Syfy from 26 September.

And watch out for **Atlantis** on BBC One and **Orphan Black** on BBC Three.

Going Out

- **20–22 September** – Manchester's 23rd annual Festival Of Fantastic Films once again plays host to genre guests, panels, auctions, themed dinner parties and movie screenings. **http://bit.ly/Fantastic240**
- **28–29 September** – Scott Snyder, Greg Capullo, Becky Cloonan and Paul Cornell are among the guests at Dublin International Comics Expo. **http://bit.ly/DICE240**
- **4–5 October** – Chow down on a feast of Gin'Tak Spears and Iced Bloodwine Delight at the Klingon Banquet. **http://bit.ly/Klingon240**
- **5 October** – Nottingham hosts its first Nerdfest, with guests of honour Dylan Teague and Gary Erskine. **http://bit.ly/Nerdfest240**
- **5–6 October** – Expect the usual jam-packed mix of sci-fi stars and dealer stalls at the latest London Film and Comic Con. **http://bit.ly/LFCC240**
- **12–13 October** – Richard Morgan and Gail Simone are the guests of honour at Octocon, an Irish Con celebrating the curious concepts of speculative fiction. **http://bit.ly/Otocon240**
- **12–13 October** – Get your game on at Play Expo, Manchester's gaming con, with retro machines, previews of the latest games, cosplay and competitive tournaments. **http://bit.ly/PlayExpo240**
- **15 October** – Hear Neil Gaiman read from his new book and see Chris Riddell draw live at Central Hall Westminster. **http://bit.ly/Gaiman240**

At The Pictures

- **20 September** – Recently deceased cop Ryan Reynolds teams up with Wild West Marshal Jeff Bridges to bring the law to the afterlife in **RIPD**.
- **27 September** – **The Wicker Man** is back – but there's no Nicolas Cage. It's a 40th anniversary "Final Cut" reissue.
- **4 October** – *Hanna*, *Atonement* and *The Host* star Saoirse Ronan has to contend with both World War III and being in yet another movie adaptation of a YA novel in **How I Live Now**.

ALL DATES ARE LIABLE TO CHANGE. IT'S WHAT THEY DO.

Blastermind

To celebrate *SFX*'s new superheroes bookazine, 20 questions on costumed freaks

THIS MONTH'S QUIZMASTER
Russell Lewin, Production Editor

1 What does Spider-Man say on the cover of *The Amazing Spider-Man* issue 1?

2 Which one of the following films DOES have a Stan Lee cameo? *X-Men* (2000), *The Punisher* (2003), *Ghost Rider* (2007), *X-Men: First Class* (2011).

3 Who was top-billed in *Superman II* (1980)?

4 What was unusual about 1994's *The Fantastic Four*?

5 Who played Wonder Woman in the 1974 TV movie?

6 How many episodes of the 1960s *Batman* TV series are available on Region 2 DVD?

7 WHAT SPIDER-MAN CARTOON IS THIS AN IMAGE FROM?

8 Tim Robbins appeared in which 1980s Marvel movie?

9 Name all three villains in 1997's *Batman & Robin*.

10 *Spider-Man 2* recreates which scene from *The Amazing Spider-Man* comic book issue 50?

11 Which mono-monickered Frenchman directed *Catwoman* (2004)?

12 Why does *Alpha Flight* issue 6 have a degree of notoriety?

13 What was the last solo *Avengers* film released before *Avengers Assemble*?

14 The poster for which Alfred Hitchcock film is on Peter Parker's wall in *The Amazing Spider-Man* (2012)?

15 To the nearest number divisible by ten, how many people die in *Kick-Ass* (2010)?

16 Hank Pym is also known as... (five names please!)

17 WHO THE FLIP IS THIS AND WHAT IS HE IN?

18 What tattoo did Nicolas Cage have to cover up when he was playing Ghost Rider?

19 Who said this of what superhero movie: "Wearing a costume was a source of humiliation for me and something I wouldn't want to do again soon"?

20 WHICH MARVEL CHARACTER DO THESE THREE ACTORS HAVE IN COMMON?

ANSWERS 1 "The Fantastic Four think I'm trapped! But they don't suspect my real power!" 2 *X-Men* (2000) 3 Gene Hackman as Lex Luthor 4 It was never released, or intended to be 5 Cathy Lee Crosby 6 Zero 7 *Spider-Man Unlimited* (1999-2001) 8 *Howard The Duck* 9 Mr Freeze, Poison Ivy, Bane 10 Peter dumping his Spider-Man costume in the dustbin in the alley 11 Pitof 12 It was John Byrne's "Snowblind" story, which features five pages that are completely white 13 *Captain America: The First Avenger* 14 *Rear Window* 15 59 16 Ant-Man, Giant-Man, Goliath, Yellowjacket, Wasp 17 It's Thor (Eric Allan Kramer) in 1988 TV movie *The Incredible Hulk Returns* 18 A tattoo of Ghost Rider! 19 Ben Affleck on playing Daredevil (although now he's Batman!) 20 The Punisher

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- **16-19** Iron Man
- **20** Spider-Man

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There are so many ways to be part of our community

THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO SUPERHEROES

SFX's latest bookazine is a massive celebration of superhero sizzlers! From Friday 27 September look out for this one-off 164-page glossy guide to all your favourite caped crime-fighters. We feature both forthcoming blockbusters and the best (and worst!) of superhero yarns of yesteryear. Film is our main focus, but we also look at TV and comics. There's our latest extensive readers' poll choosing the greatest superhero films of all time, and a gaze back at the glory days of 1970s superhero TV. Plus, we put fans' questions to the living legend that is Stan Lee!

COMIC HEROES

Verily, this is perhaps the mightiest issue of *Comic Heroes* of them all! On sale until Friday 18 October, *Comic Heroes* 20 looks at Marvel's biggest hitter, the Norse Thunder God Thor, including a complete hero history of the character. Meanwhile there's still time to get *Comic Heroes Presents: Superheroes*! A glossy 164-page collection of the best interviews and features from the *CH* archives celebrating the top 50 superhero characters as voted for by you. **www.comicheroesmagazine.com**

DIGITAL MAGAZINES

SFX, *SFX Special Editions* (pictured) and *Comic Heroes* are now available on most major digital platforms: Newsstand for iPad, iPhone and iPod Touch, Zinio, Google Play, Barnes & Noble Nook and Kindle Fire! Prices are the same across all digital providers, only the free trial periods are different (30 days on Newsstand, Google and Kindle, 14 days on Nook). On Apple Newsstand it's possible to get two free issues of *SFX* when you sign up! And we've also got our *Instant Guide To Zombies*, a 40-page mini-mag dedicated to *The Walking Dead*, *World War Z* and more. Check it out on your iPad or iPhone from within our *SFX* container app. See p45 for all our print and digital subscription links.

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"My handkerchief smells of mackerel"

MAY THE BE WITH

The latest Marvel blockbuster is nearly upon us. Joseph McCabe finds out why *Thor: The Dark World* is the stuff of legend

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NORSE YOU

POWER ISN'T ALWAYS FUN. FOR ALL ITS perks, it demands a level of responsibility that can wear heavy on a politician, a boss or even a Norse god. Creative power is like that too, just like the kind given a filmmaker crafting a sequel to perhaps the most unexpected hit in Marvel Studios' ever-growing stable of blockbusters – 2010's *Thor*. Sir Kenneth Branagh's film found a way to make audiences sympathise with an Adonis-like warrior prince of ancient mythology. But *Thor*'s tale of a brash son exiled to Earth by his father in order to learn humility resonated with audiences whose taste for flawed heroes had grown with each new entry in the studio's canon. Charismatic performances from break-out stars Chris Hemsworth and Tom Hiddleston and Oscar winners Natalie Portman and Anthony Hopkins didn't hurt. ↬

Will *Thor 2* be better than the other red-caped superhero's film this year?

That's what we like, smiling in the face of adversity.

Yet as successful as *Thor* was, Marvel – as the studio demonstrated in *Iron Man 2* and *3* – wanted to try something different with its sequel; and enlisted a new director, one not unfamiliar with high fantasy – *Game Of Thrones*' Alan Taylor. As *SFX* learns when we speak with the articulate helmer, Taylor's a man perfectly suited to see the hammer-swinging Avenger enter The Dark World.

"Like *Game Of Thrones*," says the filmmaker, "*Thor* is grounded in relatable intense human emotions, intimate emotion. That was my guiding principle in doing this. I loved Kenneth Branagh's cast. I think keeping the story focused on an almost Shakespearean quartet of characters is a great idea. I differed from his choice of look, but I admired his reason for choosing it. When I asked about it, I was told that the idea was, in his mind, these are not gods. These are a superior alien race with superior alien technology that was mistaken for gods a thousand years ago by us. That all makes brilliant sense, and fits in with the Marvel Universe. The downside for me is that it led to interiors that were clean, shiny, new, and armour that felt fake to me."

"I have this love of history. I love doing period stuff, and I was immersed in *Game Of Thrones*. I was lucky that Marvel seemed to have an appetite for that this time. They'd consciously steered away from that kind of thing in the first one. Because they wanted to make sure they were distinguishing themselves from *Lord Of The Rings*. They didn't want to be mistaken for that. But by the time I came along it seemed like they were ready to embrace a slightly more historical attitude towards it."

DIFFERENT TACK

Taylor's historical approach – one rife with horses and "raw Viking fur" – suited *The Dark World*'s grittier story, in which Thor's beloved Jane Foster (Portman) is targeted by his enemies, and brought to his home in a reverse spin on the original's fish-out-of-water tale.

Portman – who, along with Odin himself (Sir Anthony Hopkins), joins Taylor in chatting with *SFX* – explains that *The Dark World*'s scenario, like that of the first film, offers room for humour amidst the madness.

"Because she's a scientist," says the actress, "there's all of these things that she's thought about or discussed or theorised about, and [now] she's seeing it in reality; so there's so much wonder with it that it's kind of a different reaction than Thor had coming to Earth. Because Earth was a downgrade for him of course, and this is a really scientifically, technologically advanced culture. So she's amazed at everything, and a lot of the comedy comes out of that. Because things that they take for granted she thinks are miraculous.

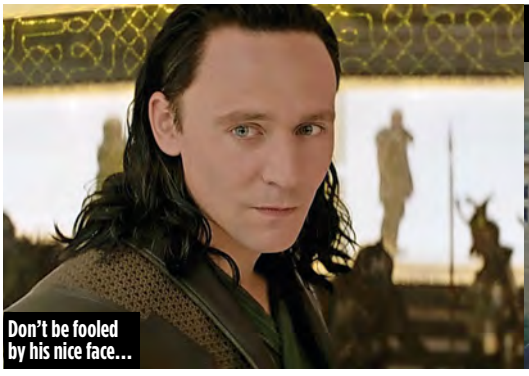
"That's one of the things that Marvel movies do so well – they always keep the comedy amid the action and the drama that is part of these films as well. It keeps it entertaining. It's more like life too – even in the worst situations, we're always making jokes to lighten things up."

With *The Dark World*'s new antagonists (joining Thor's returning brother/arch-enemy Loki), Thor and Jane's situation couldn't be much worse.

"The new villain is Malekith the Accursed," says Taylor, "who is the leader of the Dark Elves. He comes from the Marvel Comics Universe. He also comes from the Norse mythology. He has a wonderful henchman/partner whose name is Algrim, who is transformed into a creature called Kurse, who's played by a great actor, *Lost*'s Adewale Akinnuoye-Agbaje. He somehow managed to take this monster and make him sexy. I don't think anyone else in the world could do it, but he did it. Malekith is played by Chris Eccleston. The Dark Elves were invented for this. That was one of the delights of the design of this thing – they look cool and they were fun to invent."

With new enemies, adds the director, there came new settings, for which *The Dark World* made good use of its UK locations, including St Paul's Cathedral.

"Greenwich is the site of our final battle. I like the formality of that environment. It's a beautiful place to shoot chaos. But they're very sensitive about St Paul's. You can't destroy it because it survived the Blitz. They really don't want superheroes to come along and smash it. So we had to negotiate how many roof tiles we were able to take off when something hits it."


Don't be fooled by his nice face...

Those big grins won't last all the movie.

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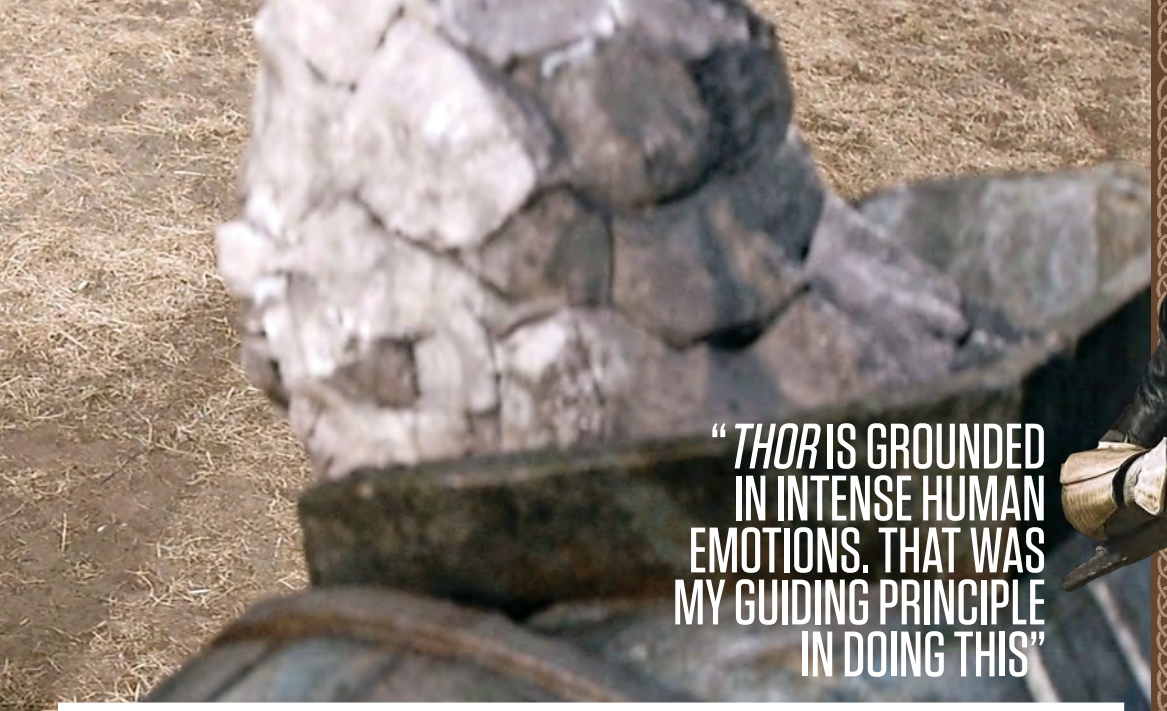

"*THOR* IS GROUNDED IN INTENSE HUMAN EMOTIONS. THAT WAS MY GUIDING PRINCIPLE IN DOING THIS"

Who's this? It's only Ninth Doctor Christopher Eccleston!

"Both [films] were terrific experiences," beams Hopkins, "but this one was different. Because it was filmed in Britain, and the British weather is always so dreary and grey. I love it. We were filming in the studio and in an open arena at one point. And it was cold, and it could have been the Nordic gods. It added to it. And the film sets were much more grounded. Do you remember *Alien* with Ridley Scott? The spaceship looked like it had been used. It looked like an old spaceship. That's what *Thor 2* looked like on the sets – they look like they'd been lived in for many centuries. In a way that had an effect, on me anyway. I said to Chris Hemsworth, 'I think these sets are really good, aren't they?' He said, 'Yeah, they're more real.'"

DAD'S THE WORD

Has Odin's relationship with Thor changed this time around? Hopkins laughs. "Well, not that much. There's always been a kind of tension between them, father and son. He's proud, and I'm reluctantly proud of him, but I always have to keep him on a short leash. Because he's crazy, he's headstrong."

Taylor nods in agreement. "One of the things I love about the character is that it's an ongoing coming-of-age story. He's not a static superhero that fights crime. He's an evolving prince, who's learning something every time. A lot of it is told as a kind of sequential story of a hero heading towards the throne. It started wonderfully with Kenneth Branagh and the *Henry V* references – of a man who's not ready for the throne. In ours, we continue to track that story – it's Thor maturing. The film is called *The Dark World*, which is the realm of the Dark Elves, but it's also adulthood in my mind. He's growing up enough to realise that life is complicated, life is dark, you sacrifice things you don't want to sacrifice. Nothing is as simple as you thought it was. So it's about watching him mature to that realisation."

The central relationships, adds the director, remain "Thor and Jane and Thor and Loki. We take the brothers' relationship to places it's never been before. Because Loki's been a brilliant villain twice, so you have to have something new. Thor and Loki both change a *lot* in this because of what they go through." ↪

REMAKING MALEKITH

Created by Walt Simonson, Malekith the Accursed first appeared in *Thor* #344 (June 1984). "But Malekith in the comic books looks like he's Harlequin," says director Alan Taylor, explaining his reimagining for *The Dark World*, "and he's got '70s rock star hair. There will be some fans who will hate us because we don't have him wearing a Harlequin outfit with hair, but it's really fun to create a new look. And I think you always have to tie into something within the comic book world. So Malekith has a signature black-white face in the comics that we pay service to."

GET LOKI

Pin-up Trickster god **Tom Hiddleston** talks fan love, poledancing and the power of the mewling quim...

NO CHARACTER IN THE MARVEL movie universe has won as much fan worship as Loki, the god of Mischief. Having menaced both Thor and the Avengers, he's the studio's only villain to appear in more than one of its movies, and *The Dark World* finds him back for round three. But Loki's big-screen appearances are the tip of an Asgardian iceberg of fan love, evident in the countless gifs, memes, and songs in which the trickster is paid tribute. "I didn't expect Loki to feel so loved," Hiddleston confesses to *SFX*. "But I'm thrilled that he is."

You clearly enjoy having fun with your many fans, like when you appeared in character and costume at this year's Comic-Con.

It was so fun. I felt like Mick Jagger.

It showed. What do you think of the Tumblr/fangirl/gif culture that's developed around Loki?

On one level, it's a huge compliment, because something I've done has captured the imagination of a group of people, and that's what you hope for. I feel so lucky. Any actor would feel lucky to garner the appreciation of people. It was a surprise. But I'm my own worst critic, and I'm my own worst slave driver, so I try not to worry about what they think *too* much. But they are a zealous and passionate and creative group of people [laughs]. They've sent me some extraordinary fan art.

What's the strangest?

The weirdest stuff is without question the pole-dancing stuff. It comes from this beat at the end of *Thor* where I spin around a pole with this spear which I've embedded in the ground, because I've been trying to take Thor's head off with it. I spin around and kick him in the chest. Fans have interpreted that as symptomatic of my hidden talent at pole dancing. And they take it to a level which is... very graphic [laughs]. So that's quite surprising. On the other hand I do get some amazing letters where people simply say how much they love the character. There's something about the sadness in him that people can relate to, and they find it moving and inspiring.

They also love your "mewling quim" line in *Avengers*. What was your reaction when you first read that? Did you relish saying it?

Absolutely. When I saw it in the script I wrote a "mewling quim" email to Joss Whedon, thanking him for bringing ancient English cuss words back to the vernacular. It was such a witty and insulting thing to

PORTRAIT BY IAN DERRY

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"WHEN I SAW THAT LINE IN THE SCRIPT I WROTE A 'MEWLING QUIM' EMAIL TO JOSS WHEDON, THANKING HIM"

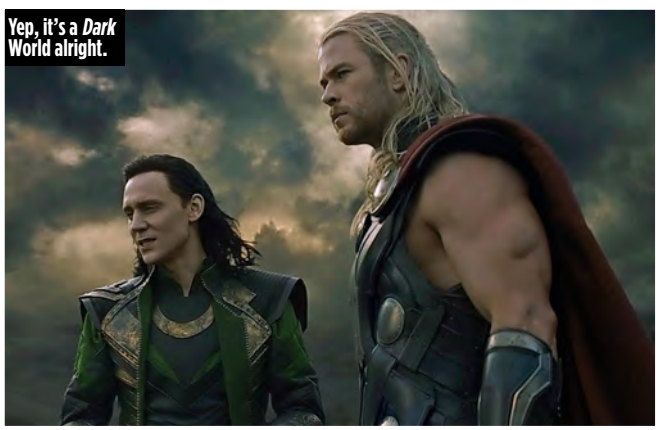
say. It seemed so right for him to call Black Widow a mewling quim in that moment... Scarlett Johansson is a real worker, and we ran that scene over and over and over again. We shot it on a Monday, and I spent the whole weekend at her house, and we just ran the scene, because we wanted to be playing a really nice set of tennis when got on stage. And every time we got to that line we just burst out in fits of hysterics – because it seemed so outlandish. We both thought it would get cut from the film. I think Joss thought it would get cut from the film. It didn't, and it became this wonderful kind of signature for the character.

The other meme out now is the riff on Daft Punk's "Get Lucky", for which fans have substituted "Get Loki".

Oh yeah, yeah. That's the crazy thing – I'm a *huge* Daft Punk fan. When I was at university – I was at Cambridge from 1999 to 2002 – and I think the "One More Time" album *Discovery* came out in 2000 or thereabouts. That album was my signature album. If it was playing, people would be like, "Oh, Tom's obviously in his room." And I was always the last lone sweaty figure on the dance floor demanding the DJ play "Aerodynamic" or something. So I really am an enormous fan of Daft Punk, and I find it so funny. Because the new album's amazing, *Random Access Memories*... I run, I'm a big runner, and I run to the album and I love the song. And it's like, now "We're up all night to get Loki."

Does that version of the song tend to get stuck in your head?

To be honest I try to avoid that song now, just when I'm running. Because now it's taken on this whole new meaning. The weirdest moment was when I was signing at Comic-Con, and they were playing popular music, bits of Lady Gaga and Rihanna and whatever else it was. "Get Lucky" came on and the whole Comic-Con floor started singing along and calling it "Get Loki." It was so surreal!



Yep, it's a *Dark* World alright.

A knight playing a god – and good ol' Chris Hemsworth.

Taylor admits that his own struggle on *The Dark World* was one of balance; beginning with that between humour and drama. "One of the most important things is to remember to be funny in these movies. Humour is very much a part of this movie, despite a darkening in tone."

Additional juggling was required for the film's design, which blends Taylor's historical approach with a high level of technology. "That is the amazing challenge. You've got guys with swords, but you've got gunships levitating, laser blasts, and you have to believe that these are all in a coherent world. I think it works. But it gets loony. We literally have an observatory with Heimdall that can shoot the Rainbow Bridge across the universe – and Thor goes to visit him and he rides a horse. But I have no trouble with that, because in my mind this is an ancient, ancient culture that highly reveres the horse and the culture of the horse. We still use fountain pens because we think they're really cool – it's not like we all use laser pens. So I think there's a living culture that keeps these things. To me the defining thing was that Thor is a superhero amongst many superheroes, but the thing that makes him different is the thing that should be featured in the movie. And that is that he's also a warrior prince from an ancient culture."

Unlike his protagonist, Taylor didn't let power overinflate his pride, and sought the help of *Avengers* mastermind Joss Whedon when several scenes proved especially challenging.

"Joss came in to save our lives a couple of times," laughs the director. "We had a major scene that was not working on the page at all in London, and he basically got airlifted in, like a SWAT team or something. He came down, rewrote the scene, and before he got back to his plane I sort of grabbed him and said, 'And this scene and this scene?' And he rewrote two other scenes that I thought had problems. Then finally we let go of him, he took off again, and we shot the scenes; and they were just much better and much lighter on their feet. Much more fun, much more surprising than what we had been trying to do. I can relate to guys who come out of the TV world, since that's where I come from. And being able to land and work and solve a problem quickly... I really was grateful." SFX

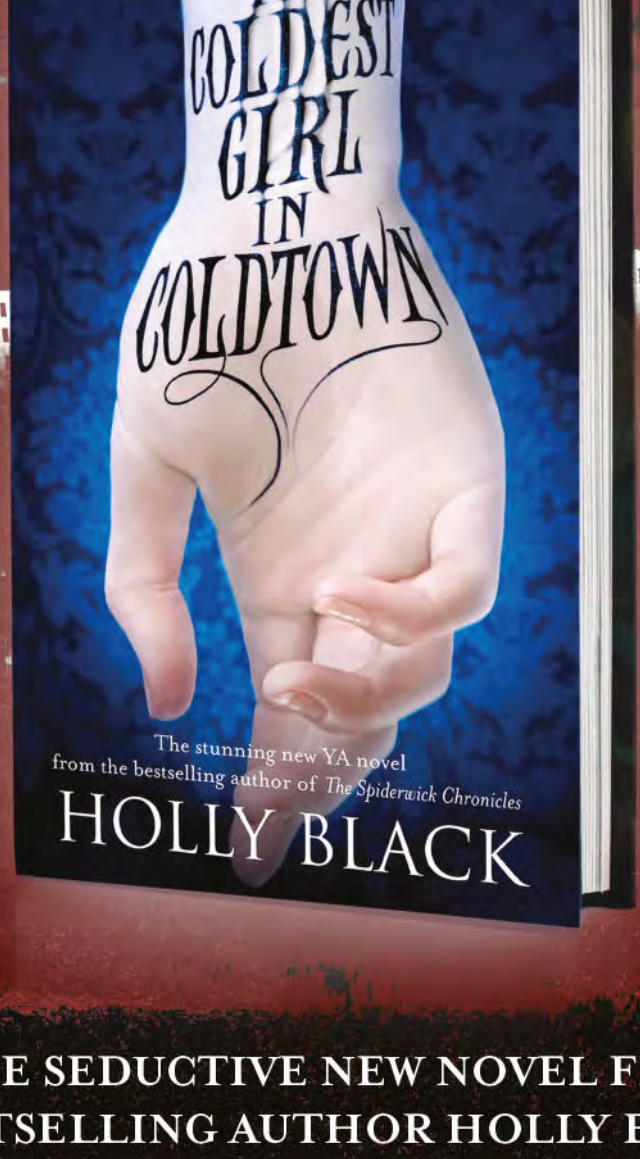
Thor: The Dark World is released by Disney on Wednesday 30 October.

COLDTOWN

WAS DANGEROUS

A GLAMOROUS CAGE

A PRISON FOR THE DAMNED
AND THOSE WHO WANTED TO PARTY WITH THEM



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SIGNED, SHIELD & DELIVERED

Prepare to get excited. The small screen is about to get that bit bigger with *Marvel's Agents Of SHIELD*, as *SFX* reveals

NEW SHOW! MARVEL'S AGENTS OF SHIELD

- **SEASON:** 1
- **US BROADCAST:** ABC from 24 September
- **UK BROADCAST:** Channel 4 late September

EVEN WITH GEEK HYPE

hitting an all-time high, no genre show has achieved the instant, fever-pitch anticipation that's come with *Marvel's Agents of SHIELD*.

And no wonder. Just about everyone on the planet saw 2012's *Avengers Assemble*, which retroactively makes it the best backdoor pilot in history. While the chatter has chiefly focused on how Clark Gregg's professional fanboy Agent Coulson defies his RIP status – and, of course, which big-screen icons may cameo – there's another big story waiting behind the scenes.

The series has assembled a freakishly talented dream team to craft the small-screen adventures of Marvel's hi-tech black-ops division. The roster of familiar genre creatives includes Jeph Loeb (*Smallville*, *Heroes*), Maurissa Tancharoen & Jed Whedon (*Dollhouse*), Jeffrey Bell (*Angel*) and the grand geek himself, Joss Whedon. Even more exciting is how giddy they sound about getting to work on a project with this pedigree.

"Obviously this is an important day for Marvel, but also for me personally," Loeb says about the creation of the show. "Three years ago Marvel called up and said 'We'd like to take the peanut butter side of your brain – which is making television shows and movies – and combine it with the chocolate side of your brain – which is writing comics for so many years – and put them together and make some television shows.' It was right around the time of *The Avengers*. It had not come out yet when I was working on *Ultimate Spider-Man*, our animated series. Clark Gregg had been on that show for two years. At that time, he leaned over and said to me, "Hey, Coulson lives after *The Avengers* movie in a television series?" I said, 'He *could* but people don't know you are dead yet, so let's see how that plays.' Then it became the third largest movie of all time and Coulson became one of the most beloved characters. Then I sat with Joss and talked about it and here we are today. This to me is unbelievable."

YOU ONLY LIVE TWICE

The creative team agree that Coulson, and Clark Gregg, truly is the key to this series. As Jeff Bell explains, "[Clark] showed up in the first *Iron Man* with a couple of lines and ↪

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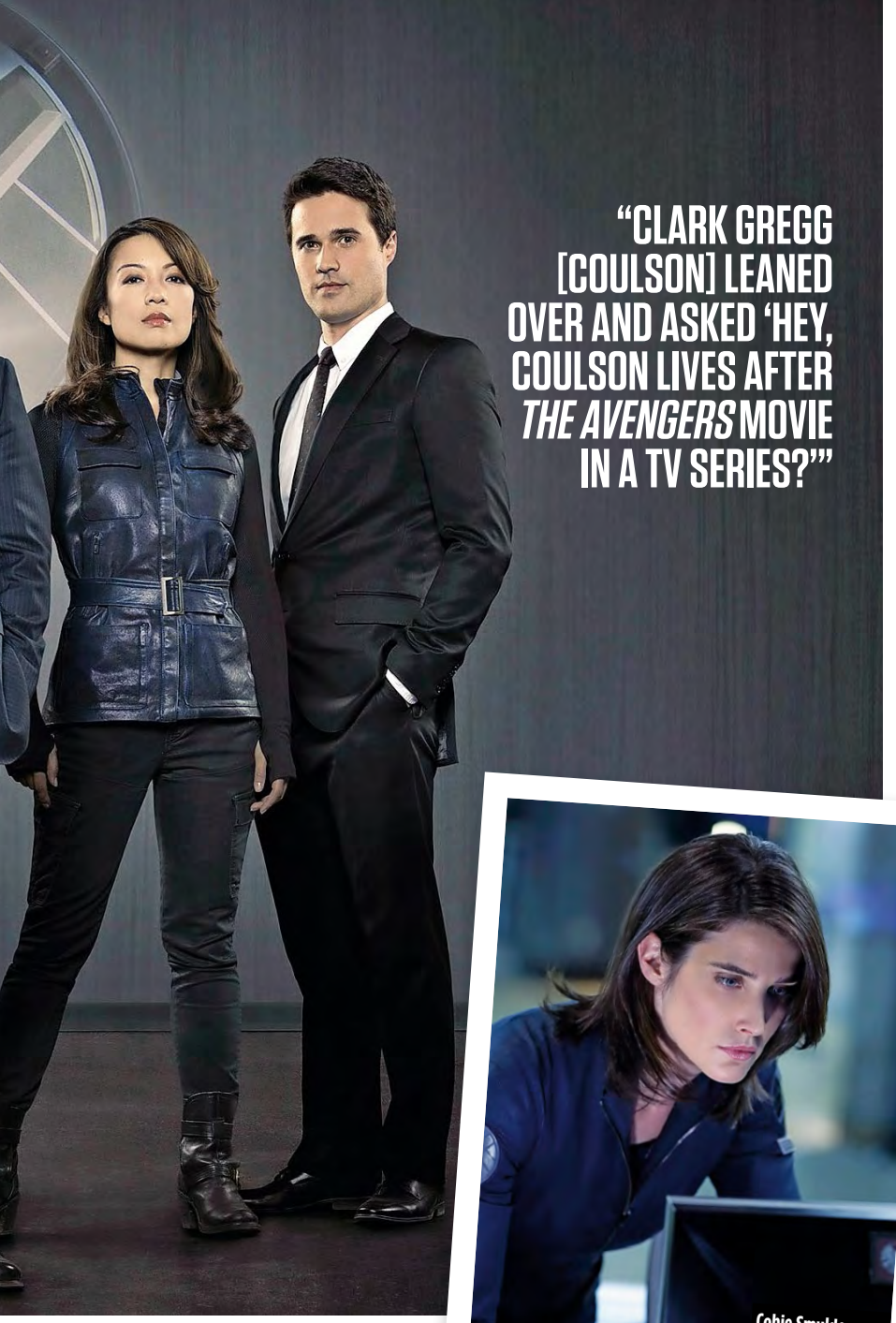
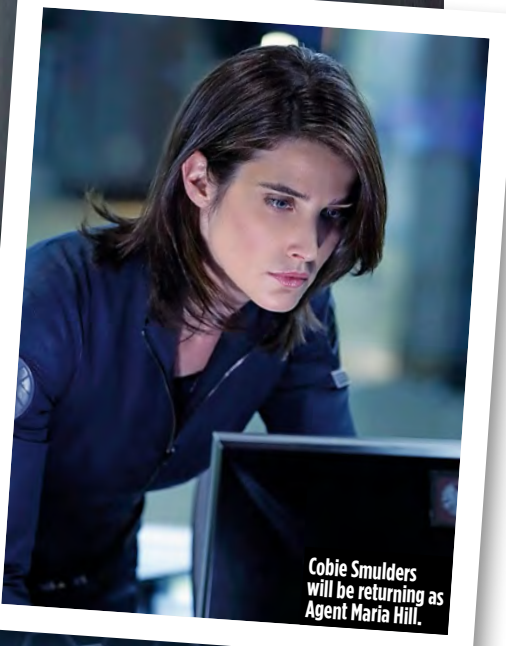
"CLARK GREGG [COULSON] LEANED OVER AND ASKED 'HEY, COULSON LIVES AFTER *THE AVENGERS* MOVIE IN A TV SERIES?'"





Cobie Smulders will be returning as Agent Maria Hill.

They're all trapped inside an oversized beehive. No one tell them.

RESURRECTION MAN

Coulson lives! Clark Gregg flashes the SHIELD badge once more...

You obviously have a lot of love for Agent Coulson. What's the attraction?

What I find compelling about the show, and playing Agent Coulson, is that this guy has seen things that would turn your hair white and yet he still believes the dream and heroism. Every step of the way, a different writing/directing team has turned this guy into something new and added another dimension that's left me asking, "What now?" That certainly has never been more true than the last time I saw him when he was bleeding out on a Helicarrier.

Where is Coulson's headspace when we meet him again in the pilot?

He's been given a version of what he's still doing here, and it may not be true. I think this guy has got to be questioning everything.

Have they explained if what you do in the show will impact the movieverse?

Yeah, what's exciting to me is that what happens [in the show] connects to the movies and vice versa. Marvel uses this stuff to make one giant, expanding story.

How much quality time are you spending with Lola (Coulson's '58 Corvette)?

[Laughs] I do get to drive around in Lola, faster than they'd like. It's fun to drive and have everyone get mad at how fast I'm driving.

Tara Bennett

"Well, I didn't think I'd be seeing you again."

© LARRY BUSACCA/GETTY IMAGES (1)

the people watching said he was interesting. Along the way, he got a little bit more, and then Joss in *The Avengers* made him a fan. He liked the cards and SHIELD history. He was the audience surrogate in the movies. You could be this guy who shows up and does his job around these guys and is taken for granted. 'Nobody ever tells me anything,' - the way Clark presents that line, everyone gets that! He is our way into the world."

Loeb adds, "As a person you want to work with, Clark's everything you want him to be: smart, funny, has great instincts, he can do comedy or drama and remembers all of his lines. He's a consummate professional, who is unbelievably fun to work with, but at the same time is just a great guy. Clark is really a hero for today and Agent Coulson embodies that in a really big way."

And it's no secret Joss Whedon has been nursing a strong bro-crush on the character throughout the cinematic instalments, script-doctoring Coulson into plenty of juicy cameos along the way. With Coulson at the centre of the show, Whedon says the writers' room "can take our time with [the series] and the more leisurely moments are the heart of the thing. We don't have to worry about if the world is at stake. What's exciting about the show for me is that the world *is* at stake for someone. Someone is having an apocalypse and SHIELD can get into that on a personal level and not necessarily on a giant level."

That naturally segues into discussion of the show's scale. A TV series may not boast the budget of a Marvel blockbuster, but Whedon argues it doesn't matter anyway because *Agents Of SHIELD* is never going to try to attain those heights. "The Agents of SHIELD are in the Marvel universe and ABC pretty much understood going in what we wanted to do, which was use the feeling you get from the Marvel cinematic universe and the comic books: the fun, the excitement, complexity and soap opera of it that makes you come back issue after issue. It's also ABC and they'd like a story where the characters progress which is what I like. So the mandate was 'Do that thing you do!'

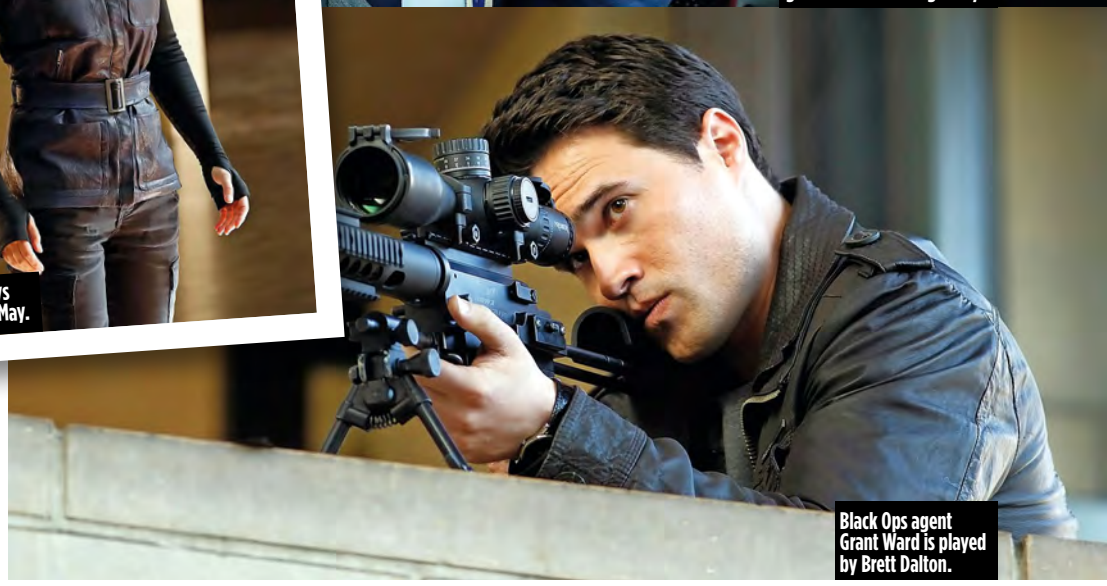
"We've jumped through all the hoops to make this work," he continues. Has it been a different experience from his last two series, *Dollhouse* and *Firefly*? Whedon nods. "I think the difference is ABC really did know what we were giving them and what we wanted. During the process we got a real feeling of support instead of a feeling of 'Huh?' which I got with my last two. All they'd like is every episode to be contained so you feel like something was accomplished, but the characters move forward so you want to see what happens to them next."

Bell continues, "And this whole world is fantastic. To me, the movies have always been about people. There are all these giant monsters and heroes, but there have always been really interesting humans. Nick Fury in the comics is just a guy."

Loeb adds, "Our tagline is 'Not all heroes are super' and that's really important to us. It's not just a tagline, but it talks about the human condition in a way that is really important. I do believe there are real heroes out there whether they are doctors, or nurses or cops or whatever."

Ian De Castecker and Elizabeth Henstridge: two good-lookers among many.

Ming-Na Wen plays ace pilot Melinda May.



Black Ops agent Grant Ward is played by Brett Dalton.

FINDING YOUR GIFT

"Jeph has a thing that I really like," Bell explains. "Although we can't say this word on our show – the word mutant, because that's not part of our world – he says every person has a mutant gift and your job in life is to figure out what your mutant gift is and how best to use it. I think that's really cool."

Loeb smiles and adds, "You should revel in that and that's what this show is about – finding those inspirational, heroic things in people and making you feel good about it."

"But," Whedon adds, "the whole show *is* based on the changes in the world because of *The Avengers*. Now everybody knows.

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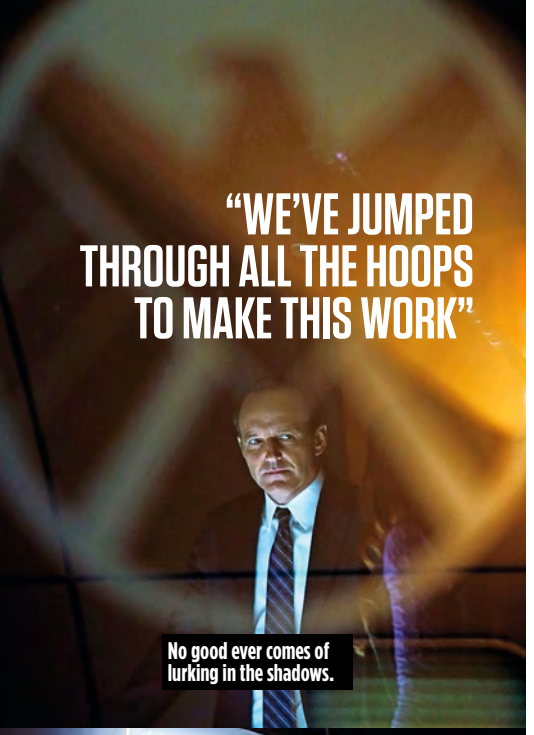

When something really important happens in the Marvel universe, we will have to take it into account. It's tricky but throwing a little something in there, and for it to all feel like it's part of one big story is exciting. We're not going to pass up that opportunity totally."

Given Whedon is one of the key architects of all things Marvel just now, you wonder how much time he will be able to devote to the show. "It's very important to me that it's right," Whedon says. "Obviously I'm going to be involved but I also surrounded myself with people who know what I'm trying to do, so that when I can't be, the show goes forward the way it should. I will be as involved as I can be. Sometimes I have unlimited energy and sometimes I'm the other guy. The important thing is the show is already bigger than just me." **Tara Bennett**

THE SHIELD FILE

Inspired by the Bond-fired spy boom of the '60s, SHIELD debuted in *Strange Tales* #135 in 1965. Stan Lee and Jack Kirby repurposed their WW2 hero Nick Fury to front the superspy organisation.

- **Acronymania! SHIELD initially stood for Supreme Headquarters International Espionage Law-enforcement Division, later changed to Supreme High Intelligence Espionage And Logistics Directorate. The screen version stands for Strategic Homeland Intervention Enforcement and Logistics Division.**
- Specialist SHIELD units include the Hulkbusters and the Godzilla Squad. So what's with the grudge against big green monsters?
- **There's also a telepathic Psi Division. Sister agencies include ARMOR (Altered Reality Monitoring And Operational Response) and SWORD (Sentient World Observation And Response Department), battling alien threats.**
- SHIELD is a progressive employer. Contessa Valentina Allegra de la Fontaine led the all-woman Femme Force and Maria Hill rose to Executive Director.
- **SHIELD encountered the Decepticons in issue 3 of Marvel's *Transformers* comic.**
- It's recently been revealed that SHIELD is simply the latest iteration of the Brotherhood of the Shield, an ancient transglobal secret society that recruited Leonardo Da Vinci and Galileo.
- **A 1965 issue of *Daredevil* told us there's a TV show in the Marvel universe called *Agent Of SHIELD*. Now that's prescience for you...**

Nick Setchfield

HUMAN RESOURCES

CREATOR INTERVIEW!

New faces, new threats. The zombie apocalypse enters its fourth and most thrilling year...

RETURNING SHOW! THE WALKING DEAD

- **SEASON:** 4
- **US BROADCAST:** AMC from 13 October
- **UK BROADCAST:** FOX from 18 October

IN ITS THIRD SEASON *THE WALKING DEAD* came closer than ever to matching the relentless momentum that's made Robert Kirkman's comic book a ground-breaking hit. That it did so by deviating more than ever before from its source material is an irony that's not gone unnoticed by Gale Anne Hurd. But the executive producer and genre legend tells *SFX* that's part of what makes the show a smash success as it enters its fourth year.

"The stakes get ever higher," says Hurd. "And we actually find new things to threaten our survivors. We can't say which parts [of the comic] we're following. We're following some. As you've probably heard, Robert doesn't like to repeat himself, so there's always some twist. And because we have new characters like Daryl Dixon that aren't in the comic book, and we've also killed some characters that continue to live in the comic book, it's always going to be switched up."

Hurd explains that the show will build on the events of season three's finale, which saw Rick Grimes, in the wake of his wife's death, realise his group could no longer be an island in a growing sea of survivors.

"At the end of this season," says Hurd, "they decided to include some of the Woodbury survivors. As they've incorporated people from Woodbury, obviously the group has gotten bigger. While it won't be a Rick-tatorship necessarily, we'll see if there's jockeying for position, we'll see if there's an orderly transfer of power. And we'll see how that dynamic changes our group. They'll continue to meet new people. That's the nature of this universe – people continue to be on the run and look for a safe haven; and if you think you've found one then you probably haven't... You've probably heard the first episode is called '30 Days Without An Accident'. I have a feeling their record is not going to maintain itself."

That record certainly won't be improved by the Governor, season three's wildly popular antagonist played by David Morrissey, who returns in season four.

"He will be back," Hurd promises, "He is out there. As you can see David Morrissey is sexy, if not sexier than ever; which is what makes him such an interesting villain, because he's so charismatic. We're excited to have him back but we can't say exactly when he'll make his appearance."

> **"THE STAKES GET EVER HIGHER. WE ACTUALLY FIND NEW THINGS TO THREATEN OUR SURVIVORS"**

Other human threats will also arise this year, says the exec. "Always, as with any group, there's conflict, there's competition, and not everyone is a good person. They may do bad things for all the right reasons. If you go back to when Shane shot Otis in season two – in the end Carl probably would've died if he hadn't done that. But was it the right thing to do, the humane thing to do? It's not something Rick ever would've done. I think that's partially why the show is successful, because people can discuss amongst themselves what they would have done, and your best friend or your spouse might've done something different."

Season three saw the deaths of three of the show's mainstays: Lori, Andrea, and T-Dog. Their passing will continue to impact the survivors as they meet new enemies and allies.

"Bob," Hurd gives as an example, "is a character from the comic books. He's played by a fantastic actor, and the dynamic that he brings to the show in some ways has a stabilising effect and in other ways has a destabilising effect. Whenever you add a new character they are going to impact the group. It's a group that has been grieving over the loss of so many people – with Lori's death, with Andrea's death. That changes people. It's also very difficult for them to trust and to love, because when you make that kind of commitment, it makes you even more vulnerable. So, I think part of what the show examines every season is how you maintain your humanity. Does that mean sometimes being cold, or does that mean that you just have to remain open and expose yourself to that degree of pain and grief?"

As for whether or not our heroes will make themselves vulnerable by venturing beyond the confines of their prison home... "When you think about what they're facing, they're facing more people that they have to scavenge in order to feed, and fewer munitions, so I think you can get an idea of how difficult it is, without anything new being produced."

And will they finally receive word of the undead apocalypse's worldwide impact?

"We stay within the world of our characters," says Hurd – before adding, "If that greater world impacts our characters you'll see that. So pay attention this season! That's all I can say..."

Joseph McCabe

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Rick loved playing hide and seek, he just wasn't very good at it.

HOT FOR 2013!

Karl Urban's face is still stuck in *Dredd* mode, it seems.

NEW SHOW!
ALMOST HUMAN

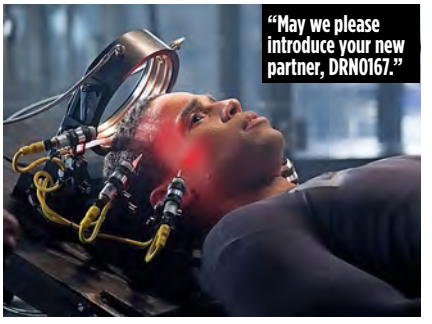
- **SEASON:** 1
- **US BROADCAST:** Fox from 4 November
- **UK BROADCAST:** TBC

COP SHOWS ARE A DIME A dozen on TV, and outside *SFX*'s traditional precinct unless they happen to involve robots and lasers. Wait, JJ Abrams and former *Fringe* executive producer JH Wyman have a new cop drama that involves both of those things? Okay, we're in. Set in the near future, it's the intriguing tale of a complex, conflicted relationship between a man and a robot.

The man is cop John Kennex (Karl Urban), newly awakened from a two-year coma and precariously dealing with the emotional fallout, a new bionic leg plus a robot named DRN0167, or Dorian (Michael Ealy), assigned as his mandatory partner. Wyman explains that John is an outlet to explore his own personal struggle with technology. "John is the last bastion of somebody who is asking questions that I ask. John feels like technology might be leaving humanity behind. He can see it on a daily basis and it terrifies him. I think he really admires what I admire in the human condition which is connection."

Using the framing device of a cop show, Wyman says they'll be weaving together a hybrid drama focusing on its core characters. "*NYPD Blue* did it very well, where you'd see a case but there is this incredible emotional stuff going on between the characters. Ultimately what I'm trying to say through the show is there is a happy balance between man and technology. There is an inevitability that we will find that perfect balance between John and Dorian, man and machine and the idea we can almost become one with technology."

Tara Bennett, with reporting by Jen Herens


"May we please introduce your new partner, DRN0167."

Stephen Amell: likes hiding in barns.

RETURNING SHOW!
ARROW

- **SEASON:** 2
- **US BROADCAST:** The CW from 9 October
- **UK BROADCAST:** Sky1 HD October

IF YEAR ONE OF *ARROW* SAW Oliver Queen transform from spoiled playboy into vengeful antihero, year two, says executive producer Andrew Kreisberg, "is really about Oliver's evolution from being the Arrow to being the Green Arrow. He really sets out in episode 2.01 – 'I don't want to be the vigilante any more. I don't want to be called The Hood. If I'm gonna do this, it has to be about something more than crossing names off a list. I realise now I need to be a hero.'"

Actress Caity Lotz was recently announced as season two's Black Canary, despite expectations that Oliver's girlfriend Dinah "Laurel" Lance (Katie Cassidy), would don the fishnets. Not to worry, says Kreisberg – Starling City has enough room for two Canaries to cry.

"Caity is a tremendously talented actor that we're very happy about adding to our ensemble," he explains. "But this is really the beginning of the Black Canary story. It's something that we've done all of last season. The first Green Arrow that we met wasn't Oliver, if you think about it, on the island. And the first Deathstroke that we met wasn't Slade Wilson. So all we're really doing with Caity's character is beginning the story of the Black Canary in a way that I think people might not be expecting based on the way that the comic books go. But there's been a method to our madness and it seems to have pleased people so far, and we hope that people continue to go on the ride with us."

Joseph McCabe

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HODDER & STOUGHTON

CREATOR INTERVIEWS!

Is that a Michael Bay fireball out to get them?

HOT FOR 2013!

MYTH CONCEPTIONS

The makers of *Merlin* move onto Greek myths for their latest Saturday night fantasy series for the Beeb – *Atlantis*

NEW SHOW! ATLANTIS

- **SEASON:** 1
- **UK BROADCAST:** BBC One this autumn
- **US BROADCAST:** BBC America from 23 November

***ATLANTIS* IS GOING TO BE BIG.** Don't take our word for it. As executive producers Johnny Capps and Julian Murphy lead us round the giant fridge that serves as the show's studios (it used to be a cold storage warehouse) they are visibly bubbling over with enthusiasm. *Atlantis*, they tell us, is "Huge!" "Enormous!" "Massive!" "Ambitious!" And when you're standing on a green screen set seemingly the size of an aircraft hanger, next to a column about ten feet across, being told the final composited shot will have 11 more columns and "a 25 foot statue that goes up through the roof", you can't help but believe them.

Capps and Murphy are hoping, of course, that *Atlantis* will be big in another way too. As the BBC's new Saturday night fantasy show, it has a lot to live up to – both *Doctor Who* and Capps and Murphy's own *Merlin* have been huge ratings successes. While Capps claims this is a "very different" show from *Merlin*, the

> **"THEY'RE THE GREEK *A-TEAM* – THE GO-TO GUYS IN ATLANTIS WHEN PEOPLE HAVE A PROBLEM"**

two series have one thing in common – a "fast and loose attitude" to sticking to the accepted myths. Greek legends it seems, are about to get a kick up the Artemis.

"Greek scholars will hate it," laughs Capps, "but also love it because it will make people talk about the myths. They have lasted so long because they're great stories and there are lots of different interpretations of them. This is our unique, quirky way of looking at them."

Although they remain slightly cagey about the exact nature of the format (we think there may be some genre-twisting surprises in store) Capps calls it "robust". The new show, which was co-created by the man who gave us *Misfits*, Howard Overman, centres on the mythical trio of Jason, Hercules and Pythagoras, who, like some Ancient Greek *Men Behaving Badly*, are sharing a house in downtown Atlantis. "We always think of them as the Greek *A-Team*," says Capps. "They are the go-to guys in Atlantis when people have a problem. And part of the show is the bromance between these three guys who will do anything for each other."

"They add a lot of humour in the show," adds Murphy. "They're a very flawed and funny trio."

And they aren't quite the heroes we know from legend. The fact that Hercules is played by formerly famously starkers steelworker Mark Addy should clue you in to that. "Our Hercules is not the Hercules of legend," explains Capps. "He's more like Falstaff. He's a man who's creating the legend of Hercules, more by telling it than doing it. He hasn't actually *done* anything."

Murphy, meanwhile, describes Jason as "a combination of lots of Greek heroes". He's portrayed by newcomer Jack Donnelly (who played the White Rabbit in *Misfits* fact fans)

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Ariadne (Aiysha Hart) and the favourite at Kempton.

while Pythagoras is *Kick-Ass 2*'s Insect Man, Robert Emms.

Also in the cast is *Hex*'s Jemima Rooper as a pre-curse Medusa who's has a thing for Hercules (do we sense a Morgana-style story-arc coming?), Sarah Parrish as Pasiphae and Juliet Stevenson as The Oracle. Another newcomer, Aiysha Hart, plays Ariadne.

Filming takes place in the custom-built studio in Chepstow and another rather more glamorous location. "In Atlas studios in Morocco there's three or four enormous sets," says Murphy. "There's a massive castle. Ridley Scott built Jerusalem there. It's about the size of Caerphilly Castle. It's the biggest set I've ever seen. Forty-foot walls. You can walk all over it. So we use that. There's a massive street complex that we use. There's a big colonaded square which we've also used. Oh, and a desert nearby."

Promising a mixture of humour, action and adventure every Saturday, Capps only half-jokingly boasts, "We aspire to make *Indiana Jones* every week, that would be the prefect thing," before assuring us, "Tonally, year one of *Atlantis* starts where *Merlin* left off."

But don't expect any *Clash Of The Titans*-style cameos from respected Brit thesps playing toga-togged gods. "One of the key rules we have in Atlantis is you never see gods," says Capps. "We don't have scenes of people in cloaks, sitting on clouds looking down. People fear the gods, people use the gods, but we never see them."

Atlantis itself isn't the island state at the centre of concentric rings of legend but a bustling Bronze Age Greek city. "We have little nods to Atlantis of legend," says Murphy, "the whole concept that it's threatened by earthquakes and the sea god Poseidon presides over it... You become aware that their religious cult is driven by a fear of water. But we tell our story very slowly. We don't want to destroy the city in the first series." **Dave Golder**

They found the script – let shooting begin!

NEW SHOW! SLEEPY HOLLOW

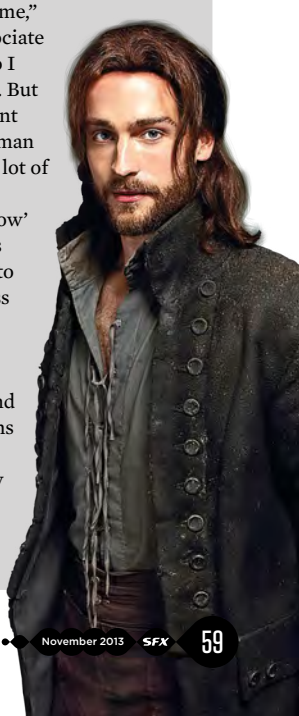
HOT FOR 2013!

- **SEASON:** 1
- **US BROADCAST:** On now on Fox
- **UK BROADCAST:** TBC

Len Wiseman isn't the first name you might associate with old-school horror. But then the co-creator and pilot helmer of *Sleepy Hollow* readily admits the show's approach to Washington Irving's classic short story is anything *but* old. It hurls its 18th century hero into 2040, for a start...

"I wanted to put together something that was fun and creepy at the same time," Wiseman tells *SFX*. "We associate *Sleepy Hollow* with horror, so I wanted it to have that aspect. But because Crane is very different in it, and Ichabod Crane is a man out of his own time, there's a lot of fun to be had with that."

"The original 'Sleepy Hollow' story was only 17 pages," says Wiseman's co-creator Roberto Orci. "We've said the headless horseman is actually [one] of the four horsemen of the apocalypse. So we take the original story and then expand it with all the world's religions and all the world's myths, and imagined what that story could continue on to be if it was longer than 17 pages." **Joseph McCabe**



CREATOR INTERVIEWS!

Just a tad different from the '70s fashions in the original show...

POWER STRUGGLE

HOT FOR 2013!

The next generation of TV's Homo Superior have relocated stateside...

NEW SHOW! THE TOMORROW PEOPLE

- **SEASON:** 1
- **US BROADCAST:** The CW from 9 October
- **UK BROADCAST:** E4 TBC

FEW SHOWS ARE AS CEMENTED in the minds of those who grew up with them as *The Tomorrow People*, that '70s Brit TV classic of super-powered teens. But Danny Cannon and Phil Klemmer, producers of Warner Brothers' new remake, say they're unafraid of the comparisons that will be inevitably drawn when longtime fans watch their US remake.

"It's not like it's so well-known here in America," says Klemmer. "I think the sky's wide open. But the series did touch us all. Danny saw it as a kid, as did [fellow executive producer] Greg [Berlanti]. So our obligation really is to just sort of honour the dreams of when these guys saw it and what it meant to them. For me, who saw it as an adult, that's kind of a good balance, with fresh eyes, figuring out how to update it and hopefully create something that will touch people in the way that the original did."

"IT'S THIS HUGE UNIVERSE TO PULL FROM, CLOSE TO 100 EPISODES. WE'VE GOT ENDLESS OPPORTUNITIES"

Klemmer admits that when his writing staff conceives new characters they sometimes keep original series characters like Elizabeth and Tyso in mind.

"Absolutely," he tells us. "It's awesome to imagine that one per cent of the television audience. You always want to keep the 99 per cent totally engaged, but you think of that one per cent, and how you're totally gonna blow their minds. It's such a thrill. I always loved doing that."

One classic *Tomorrow People* creation that's already found its way into the new show is TIM, the group's bio-computer. "He's in every episode, for sure," laughs Klemmer. "There was some incredible temp dialogue that Danny contributed. He's got a great know-it-all snarkiness."

"I was in the cutting room and they needed an English voice," adds Cannon, "so I did TIM, and I'm still TIM. I spoke the way my mother always wished I would speak, as TIM, instead of this North London rebel."

The show's pilot introduces Robbie Amell (*Arrow* star Stephen's cousin) as Stephen Jameson, a young man who discovers he possesses special abilities, and befriends a group of similarly gifted folks hiding underground from those who fear and hunt them. The first episode ends with Stephen going to work for those who destroy his kind, as a double agent.

"That's the twist," says Klemmer. "We're not planning on that sort of seismic level on every

Stephen had never been keen on vaccinations, but this was getting ridiculous.

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Have they got Jedi moves too?

episode. We really like the dynamic of him trying to live in both Ultra and the world of the Tomorrow People – the world of humans and the world of his new species. For a while, there will be complications from him trying to make that impossible balancing act."

"When I read the script," Amell tells *SFX*, "I went back and found a few of the episodes on YouTube. You could tell that although there was going to be some homage to it and some similarities, that show doesn't work in modern television. It's a 1970s TV show. But it was nice to go back and pull from something and notice they're going to have storylines from several seasons. They did a ton of episodes, and time-travelling gets involved. It's this huge universe to be able to pull from, with close to a hundred episodes of television. We've got endless opportunities."

Though some of its trappings may no longer play for modern audiences, Cannon explains why *The Tomorrow People*'s central tale of innocents transformed into super people is still relevant today...

"Hopefully every generation has that in them, to say, 'I'm not my father.' Where the '70s show came out of was the '60s, and it was based on that David Bowie song – 'Oh! You Pretty Things'. The fact that he was watching a new generation of youth rebelling against the short-haired, post-war, public-school kind of world. People were growing their hair, experimenting with drugs, experimenting with sexuality, and he was revelling in that. Right now it's the same thing. We need to keep doing that. I've looked at music for a long time now and gone, 'Where's punk rock? Where is it? Where's new wave? Where's disco? Where's something? Where's house music? Where's the next thing?'

"It's not coming," says Cannon. "But hopefully with television we can start to provoke some of that."

Joseph McCabe

Tracy Spiridakos returns as Charlie Matheson.

RETURNING SHOW! REVOLUTION

- **SEASON:** 2
- **US BROADCAST:** NBC from 25 September
- **UK BROADCAST:** Sky1 TBC

IF YOU DRIFTED AWAY FROM *Revolution* somewhere in the murky depths of its first season, showrunner Erik Kripke wants you back. First off, he promises, "It's all about full frontal male nudity. It's remarkably hardcore for what is now an 8 o'clock show." He's joking but he admits story mistakes were made that they've fixed for season two. "Monroe is still a villain and our heroes are still struggling to figure out how to be a family. Now it's all about finding storylines that can unfold and sustain over a season, plus being more interesting and provocative. We do all that, and on top of it is this intimate focus because we mostly stay in and around one town in Texas where we get to know people and dig into character. So all the complaints for season one... we listened to them and worked hard to build a better engine for season two."

Tara Bennett

He always answers the door this way. Messy, but saves time.

HOT FOR 2013!

RETURNING SHOW!

THE VAMPIRE DIARIES

- **SEASON:** 5
- **US BROADCAST:** The CW from 10 October
- **UK BROADCAST:** ITV2 TBC

NEW SHOW!

THE ORIGINALS

- **SEASON:** 1
- **US BROADCAST:** The CW from 15 October
- **UK BROADCAST:** TBC

CREATOR INTERVIEWS!

British actor Joseph Morgan (right) stars as Klaus in the spin-off show.

FAMILY UNFRIENDLY

Executive producers Julie Plec and Caroline Dries on their expanding vamp universe...

***The Originals* begins with a human woman carrying Klaus's baby. How long will the pregnancy last?**

Plec: It will run longer than a couple of episodes. Right now we've been ordered for 13, and I think we'd like, given our timeline, to crawl at a snail's pace. Episodes seem to end one night and start two hours later. So we hope that if we continue past 13 the pregnancy will continue past 13. Because otherwise it will be the fastest-growing fetus in the history of time. Season one will involve the moves and machinations of everybody as they deal with the importance and meaning of this baby.

How does the show's tone differ from that of *The Vampire Diaries*?

Plec: The tone of *The Originals* is much more cemented and actually begins with the power of family and redemption. *Vampire Diaries* was about two brothers that had been estranged from each other and the love of the same woman brings them back to orbit each other. This is about a brother saying, "My family has been fractured for so long. Now here's the hope of this child that maybe can help me put the family back together." Of course it's not gonna be easy and it's not gonna be fun, and it's probably gonna go really, really badly. But it's very much about the power of the family unit. Even more so than what launched *Vampire Diaries*. This is a show that's not rooted in a love triangle. It will be literally and tonally darker.

This season of *The Vampire Diaries* features Paul Wesley as Stefan's evil doppelganger Silas. How is Paul handling his new role?

Dries: Paul is definitely a scary, charismatic, bad-ass villain. And for the first two episodes, some of our guys aren't going to realise, "Oh, that's not Stefan." Paul's doing an awesome job, and we want Silas to be the Big Bad of the season, or at least the first chunk of the season.

Will Damon still have the best lines in *The Originals*?

How does this season begin?

Dries: We're coming back three months later. So we'll kind of touch base with what the characters have been doing all summer. We realise that poor Stefan has been drowning and dying and coming back to life. A typical summer vacation on *Vampire Diaries*! Meanwhile everyone else has been having a totally fun time. Elena and Damon are a super-sexy couple, happy for once. Caroline is ready to start school. Nobody knows that Bonnie's dead. It's like bliss, then... here's Stefan!

What's in store for Damon and Elena?

Dries: Elena's actually going to have her own supernatural-crisis-mystery thing going on at college. Then Damon's story is going to be more about Mystic Falls; all of the sudden Damon's going to realise, "Wait, everything that I thought I had set up, everything that I thought was good, is actually falling apart around me." So he's gotta spin all these plates in Mystic Falls while Elena's off at school trying to get a fresh start on her life.

Joseph McCabe

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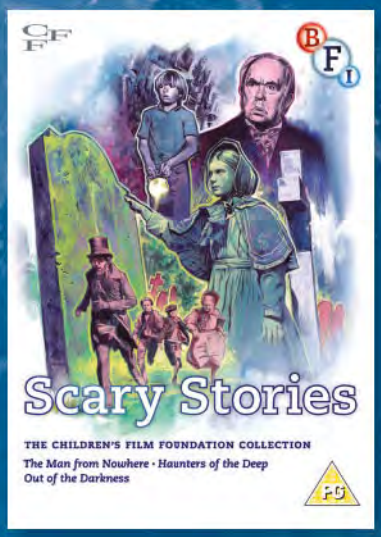

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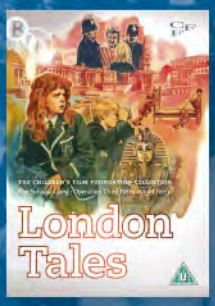

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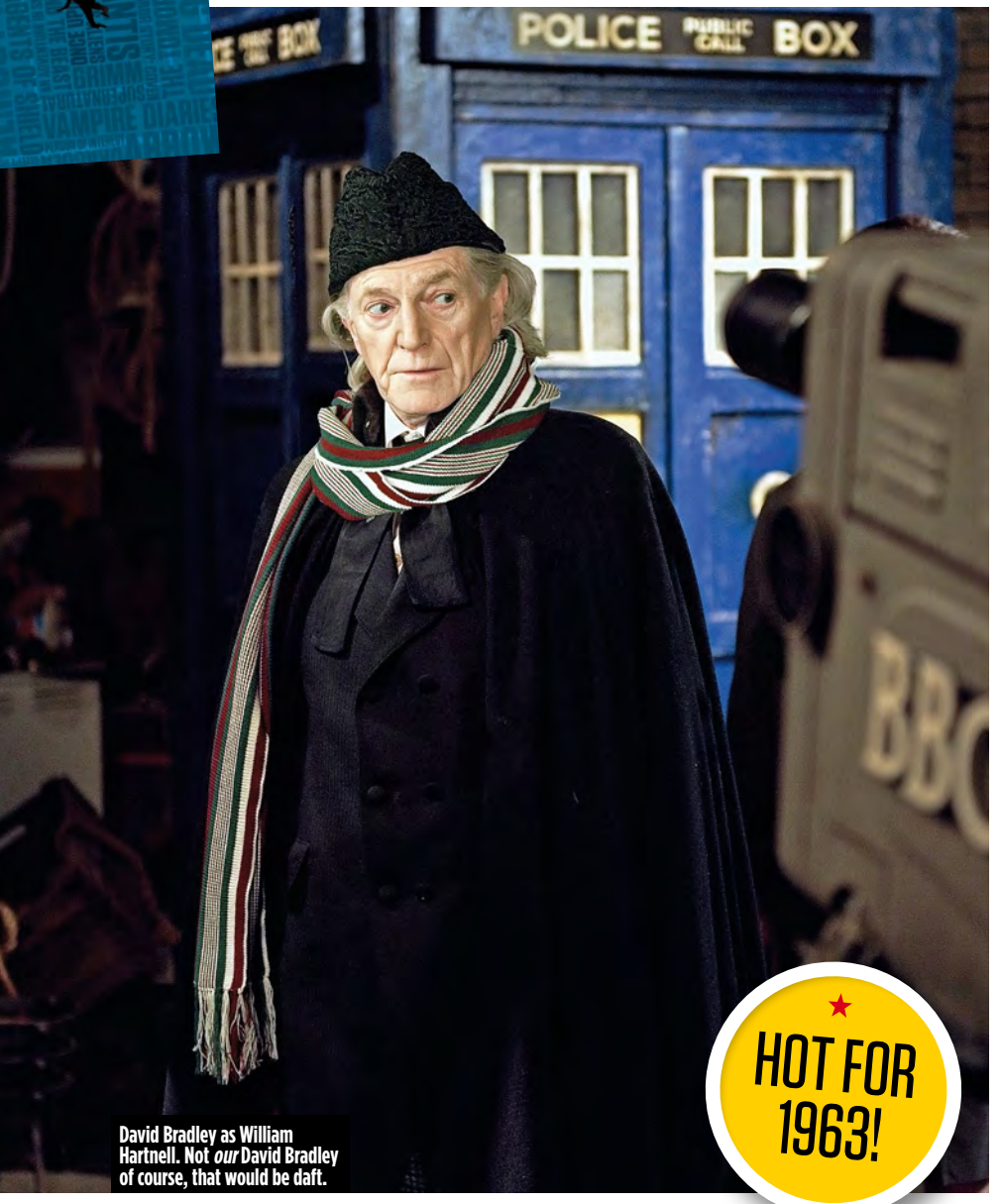

David Bradley as William Hartnell. Not *our* David Bradley of course, that would be daft.

HOT FOR 1963!

NEW SHOW!

AN ADVENTURE IN SPACE AND TIME

- **SEASON:** Standalone
- **UK BROADCAST:** TBC
- **US BROADCAST:** TBC

"It's a story I've grown up with," says writer-producer Mark Gatiss of *An Adventure In Space And Time*, the fiftieth anniversary BBC telefilm about the creation of the world's longest-running science-fiction TV show.

"Jon Pertwee, the Third Doctor, was my Doctor, but I was always very aware of how this small show became this gigantic hit for the BBC. And all these little anecdotes. The first episode was broadcast the day after Kennedy was shot, so they had to show it again the next week, because nobody was looking. Then the Daleks came in and nobody thought they were going to be anything, and then they became a worldwide phenomenon. I've known these things like it was my mother's milk. I just always thought it would be fascinating to do. Then everything came together for the fiftieth – it's the perfect time to do it."

Gatiss admits that telling the origin tale of a show to which so many individuals contributed was no mean feat.

"The biggest challenge for me was to focus the story down, because there are 15 different versions. The story alone of how the Daleks were created is kind of its own film. For a while it was sort of the B plot of this. But I had to focus it on Sydney Newman, whose idea it was, Verity Lambert, the first producer – the first female producer at the BBC, Waris Hussein, the first director, and William Hartnell, the first Doctor, whom David Bradley brilliantly plays." **Joseph McCabe**

RETURNING SHOW!

DOCTOR WHO 50TH ANNIVERSARY SPECIAL

- **SEASON:** Standalone
- **UK BROADCAST:** BBC One 23 November
- **US BROADCAST:** BBC America 23 November

Steven Moffat doesn't mean to be coy, but it's impossible to sound otherwise when you're besieged with questions about the most epochal anniversary in genre TV history, and determined to keep a few secrets.

When asked what we can expect the from the Fiftieth Anniversary episode of *Doctor Who*, the showrunner laughs, "Well you can expect David and Matt together, and you can expect John Hurt, and you can expect a lot of things I'm not gonna tell you about."

Moffat does elaborate a little, however, on the sheer difficulty of pulling together an event that will satisfy a half-century-old fan base: "It was unbelievably tough actually, to be honest with you. Making the fiftieth was *extraordinarily* difficult. We wanted to push the boat out a bit, but as usual we didn't have enough money. We're making a feature-length *Doctor Who* on the schedule and budget for an hour. And we're doing it in 3D with a budget for 2D. As ever with *Doctor Who* we didn't have enough money, but you will not see that on screen. It looks amazing.

"But I'm weary of the episodes where you announce in advance, 'This is a very important episode.' Because it should be up to the audience whether it's a very important episode... [The fiftieth] is a lot of fun, and I think you'll see some stuff that you haven't seen before, and you'll see it in three dimensions if you don't mind the headache and the glasses."
Joseph McCabe

Okay, someone distract them while we grab that script and run.

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CREATOR INTERVIEWS!

The brothers will be dealing with the angels being expelled from heaven and falling to Earth.

BETWEEN HEAVEN AND HELL

Supernatural Executive Producers Bob Singer and Jeremy Carver tell us what's in store for the Winchesters...

RETURNING SHOW! SUPERNATURAL

- **SEASON:** 9
- **US BROADCAST:** CW from 15 October
- **UK BROADCAST:** Sky Living TBC

You ended season eight with Crowley a prisoner of the brothers, Castiel made human and the angels expelled from Heaven. Where do we pick back up?

Jeremy Carver: We'll find Crowley essentially behind bars. The boys are dealing with a world they haven't had to deal with in many seasons. Hell is not Hell without the King of Hell in Hell. The angels are not in Heaven so there is something of a free-for-all. You'll have this broken landscape where alliances are going to form; some alliances we have never seen our boys make before are going to have to be made. Some decisions the boys would rather not make are going to have to be made very early on and will be very personal so they will affect the mythology.

How do you feel about the strength of the stories opening the season?

Bobby Singer: I think our first three episodes this year, which is basically a three-parter that sets up the run for the season, are as good as any three episodes I can think of.

Is there a chance Lucifer will return this season?

BS: I ran into Mark Pellegrino and he's now on *The Tomorrow People*. Mark loves the show and we love Mark. Somewhere, as we really wind our way to the end, that would be a great thing to happen but we don't know when that is going to be. I'd like to see that happen.

What's Crowley's goal this season since things backfired on him?

BS: We like the idea of Crowley being our Hannibal Lecter, and like Lecter, his goal is to get out. He's clever and will try everything he can. Eventually, he will but where that happens we don't know. We kind of like him in the cage. We like that the boys can have these one-on-ones with him. He realises if he has any chance to survive he's got to have a quid pro quo.

How will Felicia Day (Charlie) return to the series?

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JC: She will come back in episode four and help the boys with a case that will show the very early days of the Men of Letters. Matter of fact, we'll see the first two Men of Letters ever to inhabit the bunker back in 1935. It's a story we are following in the past and all I can say is: *Wizard Of Oz*.

Dead Bobby is coming back this season. Can't anyone stay dead on this show?

JC: One thing I see with the fans online is you never want to minimise a death. To that end, we are very, very careful about how we bring back Bobby. It's a way folks won't expect. It was something that felt very right to the storytelling of the episode and the season.

Can you tease what else is coming story wise?

JC: We'll have a great family mythology episode where we, and Sam, will learn a side of Dean we've never known before. And there will be an episode where Dean talks to dogs and almost gets into a street fight with a pigeon [laughs].

Tara Bennett with reporting by Jennifer Boyett

RETURNING SHOW! MISFITS

- **SEASON:** 5
- **UK BROADCAST:** E4 TBC
- **US BROADCAST:** Hulu TBC

THE BOILER SUIT BRIGADE ARE BACK for their fifth, and final, series this autumn. But this year *Misfits* won't be skimping on the superpowers. In fact, there are A-list powers in the offing.

"Last year the superpowers got amped down in the mix, and we're going to build that up in terms of what our characters do and who they get involved with," new producer Nick Pitt tells *SFX*. "More powers generally, more powers all round. And these are proper powers. None of this lactokinesis, proper powers."

But one person's A-list power is another's curse, and with the effects of the storm something of an open secret in *Misfits*' hermetically-sealed universe, a superpower support group proves unsurprisingly popular. So much so that the gang sign up themselves.

"In this world quite a lot of people have got powers, and a lot of people want rid of those powers because they get them into trouble as much as they get them out of trouble. Someone who has the gift to rid them of their powers suddenly becomes very popular."

As in the previous two seasons, series creator Howard Overman will pen six of the series' eight episodes including the finale, which should be something special. E4 are pulling out all the stops...

"We've been given a little bit extra money to make episode eight really zing and make the production values of the last episode really strong," says Pitt. "It's going to be bigger than the average episode, it's got visual effects and we've got quite a long tail in terms of the time to achieve it. I think it will deliver some of the crazy chaos and creativity that the earlier series were so explosive about. And, hopefully, it'll go out in style."

Jordan Farley

Is Finn's new power magically losing his clothes?

AND WATCH OUT FOR

Sarah Paulson will play Jessica Lange's daughter in AMERICAN HORROR STORY: COVEN (above)... Whedonverse staple Amy Acker and Sarah Shahi are regulars in season three of PERSON OF INTEREST... When the cast of ONCE UPON A TIME travels to Neverland in year three, they'll encounter some nasty mermaids before meeting the most famous mermaid of all (Ariel) later this season... *Lost*'s Naveen Andrews goes down the rabbit hole in ONCE UPON A TIME IN WONDERLAND as Aladdin's villainous Jafar... Though the nature of Colin Ferguson's HAVEN character hasn't been revealed, Ferguson hopes he'll be a love interest for Audrey Parker (Emily Rose)...

The cast of *Horrible Histories* hurl us into the fantastical puppet-filled realm of YONDERLAND (above)... Tim Jo, Reggie Jackson on THE NEIGHBORS, tells us to expect the relationship between Reggie and Amber to deepen in year two... Kristin Kreuk says BEAUTY AND THE BEAST will turn down the procedural in year two and crank up the mythology... It's wedding bells for Rosalee and Monroe in season three of GRIMM... Science and sorcery clash again in series two of WIZARDS VS ALIENS... Jonathan Rhys-Meyers goes for the throat in NBC's DRACULA (below)...

COLTON HAYNES

Arrow's young sidekick is shooting off in different directions

● WORDS BY NICK SETCHFIELD ● PHOTOGRAPHY BY MATTHEW LYN

STAR TALK!

Superheroes may have seized the world of late but their sparky teen sidekicks don't appear to be part of the invasion plans. Once Batman was nothing without Robin – now the screen's Dark Knight is defiantly a solo act. But one boy wonder is fighting to reclaim his place in the crime-punching spotlight. As Roy Harper in *Arrow*, Colton Haynes is the live-action incarnation of Speedy, the emerald archer's kid accomplice who went from bright-eyed daredevil to smack-addled screw-up in one of the most boundary-shaking storylines in comic books. In Britain to promote the return of *Arrow*, a wryly personable, gently jetlagged Haynes promises a second season that will shake the show's ever-swelling fanbase. "I think it's going to shock people, what we're going to get into this year."

BIODATA

- **OCCUPATION:** Actor
- **BORN:** 13 July 1988
- **FROM:** Wichita, USA
- **GREATEST HITS:** *Teen Wolf, The Gates, Melrose Place, Pushing Daisies, CSI: Miami*
- **RANDOM FACT:** Haynes was in the frame for Edward Cullen in *Twilight* but lost the starmaking role to Robert Pattinson.

Were you a comic book reader growing up?
My brother was an avid comic book reader, so some of that did filter down to me. I learned a lot about my character and a lot about *Arrow* from my brother. He was freaking out that I got to be in the cast. I think it was one of the best days of his life. I was more the athlete/musical theatre person. Now I'm an honorary geek. I'm fascinated by it.

Do you ever go back to the comics for inspiration?
Yeah, I do. What they love to do on the show is keep the fans guessing which path Roy Harper is going to go down. Is he going to become Arsenal, Speedy, Red Arrow? You never know. I find the Arsenal approach to be really inspiring. He was an avid drug user and eventually had one arm – his arm was cut off...

Would you go that far in the name of art?
Oh, I think it'd be fun! Not quite sure if they'd want to use the special effects to take my arm out every day. Maybe they'd just use a hacksaw.

If you go back to the original comic books Speedy's very much a surrogate Robin...
Yeah, and now he's the down-and-out kid from the ghetto – who somehow has perfect hair. Even in the comic books he has the exact same haircut. I had the Speedy cut prior to this on *Teen Wolf*. I think that's the reason they reached out to me to do the show. I was like "Should I not wear hair gel for this?" And they were like – "It's the comic book. You have to."

Do they let you in on what Roy's ultimate arc will be?
There's a four- or five-month time lapse between the first and second season. Oliver disappears, and you're going to see Roy Harper think he's a little cooler, a little stronger than he actually is. If Oliver's gone, someone has to do it, so Roy takes it upon himself. You're going to see him be knocked down a few pegs before he's brought back up. I also know either Thea or I are going to go down an extremely dark path that could possibly lead to being a villain, but they keep us in the dark on which one of us that's going to be. You can definitely expect one of those characters to change completely and really do some dark things in the second season.

> "YOU CAN EXPECT THE CHARACTERS TO DO SOME REALLY DARK THINGS IN SEASON TWO"

Roy had the famous junkie storyline in the '70s comics. Is that something you'd be keen to tackle in the show?
Oh, definitely – that's one thing that I would love to do. When my character was first introduced I mentioned that my mother had a problem with the drug Vertigo. That could also come into play – Roy's demons and family from the past could possibly resurface. I love that the show is taking a darker approach.

Can you see Roy ending up as the traditional sidekick figure?
I think Roy will end up that way, but there's a possibility you'll not really like him very much on the way there. I think he has to run through the gamut of all the struggle that Oliver went through.

Are you expecting to get a proper superhero sidekick costume?
I'm being told that I have a very long fitting. My fitting for the first year took ten minutes. And I have two days of fittings this year. I've also had to be put through a lot of physical training, so I think I may be losing the red hoodie pretty soon...

Will you walk in there and go "Make it leather, please – I can't do spandex!"
Oh, it better not be spandex... For some reason all superheroes have to be shirtless. I guess that clothes get in the way of fighting crime.

Roy's already shown his physical side. Have you had fight training?
Yeah, they kind of threw me into it. When I have a lot of lines it's difficult to learn the stunt choreography, especially because I'm not a stunt guy at all – it ends up looking like a choreographed hip-hop dance instead of actual fighting. It's embarrassing because everyone's trying to keep a straight face. I know everyone's laughing at me behind the monitors because it looks like I'm doing a Jay-Z dance, and I'm supposed to be killing these bad guys. SFX

Season two of Arrow begins on Sky1 HD this October.

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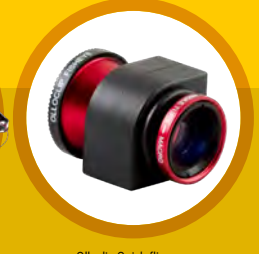

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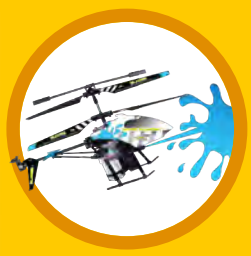

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20 REASONS WE LOVE

DOCTOR WHO IN THE 2000s

Alan Barnes concludes his look at our favourite show that's now 50 years young

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MANY YEARS AGO – AT THE dawn of the grey and awful '60s, not long before a Sydney, a "Bunny" and an Alice had a brilliant idea about a grumpy old man who lives in a Police Box that's bigger on the inside and out – a stuffy old duffer told the people of Britain that most of them had never had it so good. Most refused to believe him, quite rightly. But in the 2000s, wholly unexpectedly, *Doctor Who* fans had reason to think that for them, it was true...

1 PAUL McGANN IS (STILL) THE DOCTOR!

Around the time when people used the word "millennium" in real conversation, and when new *Doctor Who* seemed to be stuck forever in a uniquely depressing limbo (BBC Films, to give it its technical name), it looked for all the world like Paul McGann had been right to fear he'd be remembered only as the Time Lord George Lazenby. Enter Big Finish Productions, armed with a licence to make all-new audio dramas – and the chance for McGann to make as triumphant a comeback as Kylie with "Spinning Around". Only *he* didn't need hotpants to do it.

2 "HE'S GAY, AND SHE'S AN ALIEN"

Easter Saturday, 2005. We've seen the trailers, the billboards, the fold-out cover of *Radio Times*; yeah, we'll give that Russell T Whatsit's new *Doctor Who* five minutes...

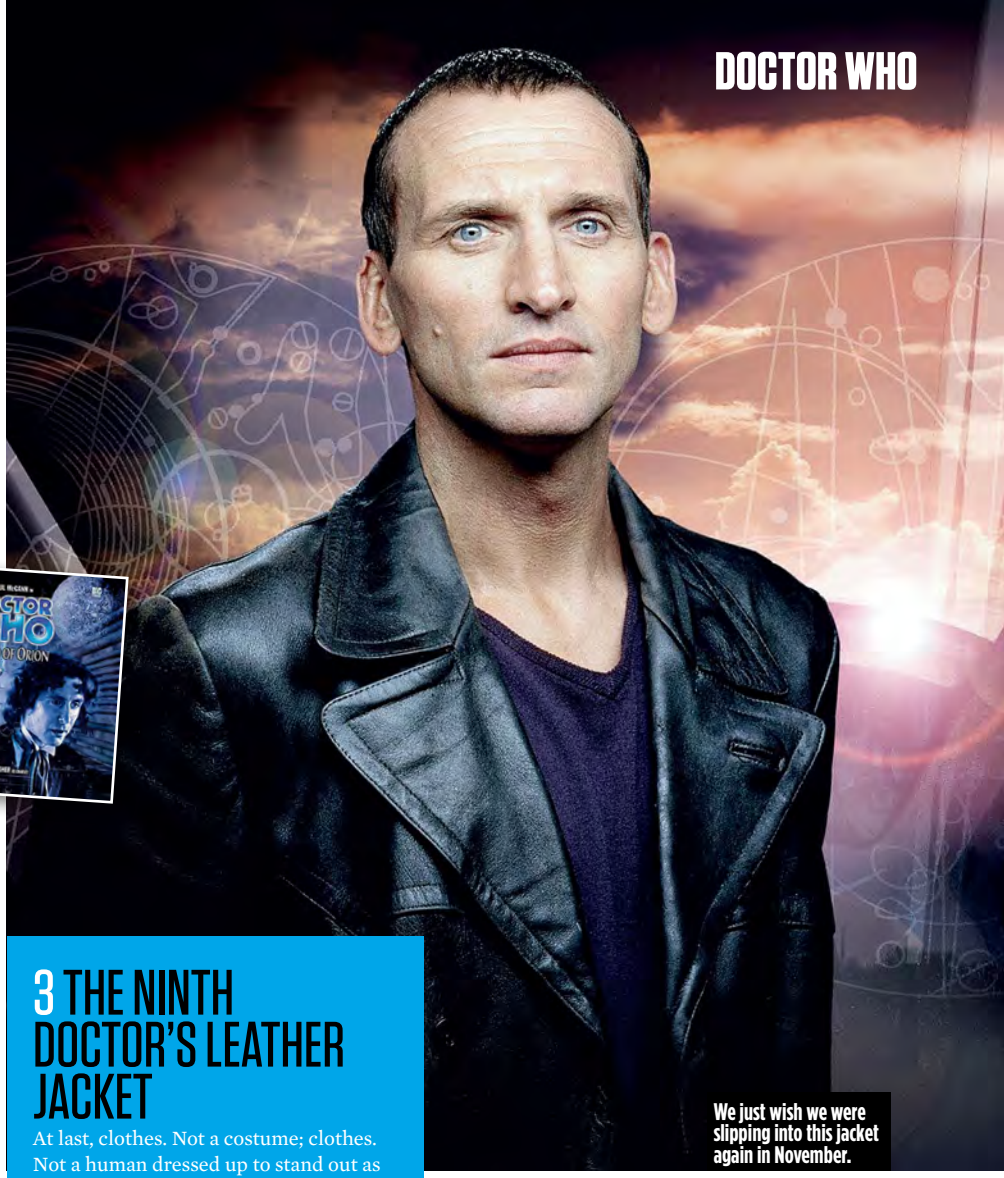
Look, there's that Billie Piper. She's alright, actually. And all these dummies are coming to life. Hang on, did you hear something f–

Ohh, there he is!– that Eccle-stone bloke... wow, big ears. Lift. Plastic arm. Explosion. Now Billie's in her flat, talking to her boyfriend and her mum about... oh, nothing much. Hmm. Might give Ant and Dec a l–

Ah, big ears is back. He's reading *Heat*, and...

What?! What's that he said? "That won't last – he's gay, and she's..." Did he mean–? Them?! He didn't. No! Can't believe he just said – ha, now he's being strangled by that plastic arm...

Quite possibly the joke that stopped several million people from turning over, just when it mattered most. Quite possibly the joke that *made* new *Doctor Who*.



We just wish we were slipping into this jacket again in November.

3 THE NINTH DOCTOR'S LEATHER JACKET

At last, clothes. Not a costume; clothes. Not a human dressed up to stand out as alien; an alien dressed down to pass as human. What took him so long to work it out?

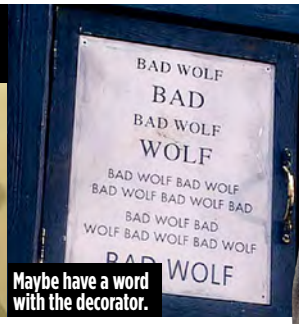
4 BAD WOLF

Not just "BAD WOLF" specifically – a phrase scattered throughout the 2005 season – but the dirty little thrill of spotting every "BAD WOLF" since: Torchwood, Saxon, planets-gone-AWOL, "He will knock four times", "The Pandorica will open", "Silence will fall", "Run, you clever boy, and remember..." Just think how great it'd have been if the Time Lords had been coming throughout all of season six, or spiders had kept popping up everywhere in 1973-4, or if the Watcher had been glimpsed in every story of Tom Baker's final year...

5 CAPTAIN JACK

One could, if one wanted, bracket time-travelling conman "Captain" Jack Harkness alongside Ian Chesterton, or Jamie McCrimmon, or Mike Yates, or Harry Sullivan – male second leads onto whom the weight of the Doctor's non-violent principles might be shifted as the narrative required. One might even argue that all of the above, in bigger ways or smaller, bore the burden of the Doctor's sublimated sexual desires, too; they had the horn so that he didn't have to. Except neither Ian, nor Jamie, nor Mike, nor Harry ever kissed the Doctor. You know – on the lips, properly, like Jack did in "The Parting Of The Ways". (Well, not while we children were watching, at least.) The only shame is that even now, eight years later, it still seems so daring, so brave. ↔

Whereas the Eighth Doctor was more into *The Chap*.



Maybe have a word with the decorator.

Jack Harkness: good with his wrist.

6 CHRISTMAS INVASIONS

Let me set you down in front of the delights that BBC One had for you on Christmas Day, 2004. At 17:35, *The Big Impression*; at 18:05, a *Harry Potter* film you've seen six times on DVD; at 20:25, oh joy! – *EastEnders*; at 21:25, *The Vicar Of Dibley*. Something seem odd? Do you think there's something... missing?

Doctor Who has owned Christmas Day for the last eight years. Totally owned it. If that doesn't strike you as utterly incredible, you are either [a] under 13; or [b] Ebenezer Scrooge.

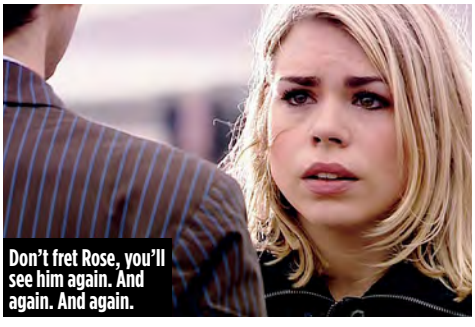
If ever there was picture to make you go gooey inside...

7 "GOODBYE, MY SARAH JANE"

In "School Reunion", the New Series proved it really *was* the same Old, by bringing David Tennant's Tenth Doctor back together with the companion every 1970s child loved the most. (And K-9.) We described Sarah Jane Smith's original farewell scene at the end of "The Hand Of Fear" as moving on a par with *Brief Encounter*, but this – this is our *Officer And A Gentleman*, in which, against all odds: He. Came. Back. We wept for her, we wept for him, we wept for the childhoods we could never have again. Then, on the strength of Elisabeth Sladen's undimmed fabulousness, they gave Sarah her own series, and made our children love her the most, as well.

8 "I LOVE YOU"

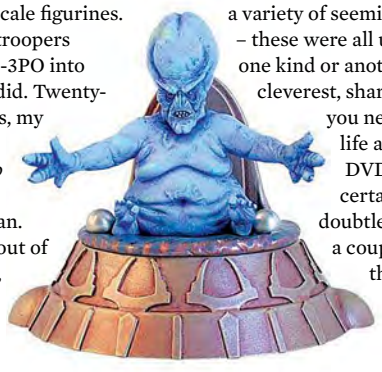
"And I suppose, if it's one last chance to say it: Rose Tyler, –" There's something sadistic about soothing the scars left by the most emotional companion departure ever in "School Reunion"... then tearing open a whole new wound two months later, as the holographic Doctor's final goodbye to Rose on the alt-beach at the alt-Bad Wolf Bay in "Doomsday" is so cruelly aborted. Plus: that *music...!*



Don't fret Rose, you'll see him again. And again. And again.

9 CHARACTER OPTIONS

I never thought that much of *Star Wars*... but my god, how I envied those 4" scale figurines. How I'd will Imperial Stormtroopers to turn into Cybermen, or C-3PO into Kamelion... but they never did. Twenty-five years later, oh joy! – Yes, my children, you *can* have an army of plastic *Doctor Who* persons, from the Moxx of Balhoon to Laszlo the Pig Man. Only *no*, you can't take them out of the plastic. Just look at them, all lined up, out of reach, on Daddy's special shelf.



10 BF'S BFFS

Imagine that the Sixth Doctor never travelled with (say) huffing history buff Evelyn Smythe; or that the Seventh Doctor and Ace never shared TARDIS space with luckless Scouse nurse Hex; or that the Eighth never hooked up with either spunky adventuress Charley, or mouthy Northerner Lucie. You can't? That'll be because Maggie Stables, Philip Olivier, India Fisher and Sheridan Smith, among others, weren't merely brilliant as Big Finish's "new" companions – they made you believe they were as unsubtractable from the Doctor's lives as Jo or Tegan or Sarah Jane.

11 SALLY SPARROW

Oh, Doctor Ten! Losing Reinette, then Rose, then Joan, then "Jenny", then Donna, all in a variety of seemingly irrevocable ways – these were all unhappy accidents of one kind or another. But to leave the cleverest, sharpest, bravest companion you never had mouldering her life away in a secondhand DVD emporium, one that a certain online monstercorp doubtless forced out of business a couple of years later – well, that's just unforgiveably remiss. Stupid, *stupid* Doctor Ten!

The Great Carey Mulligan.

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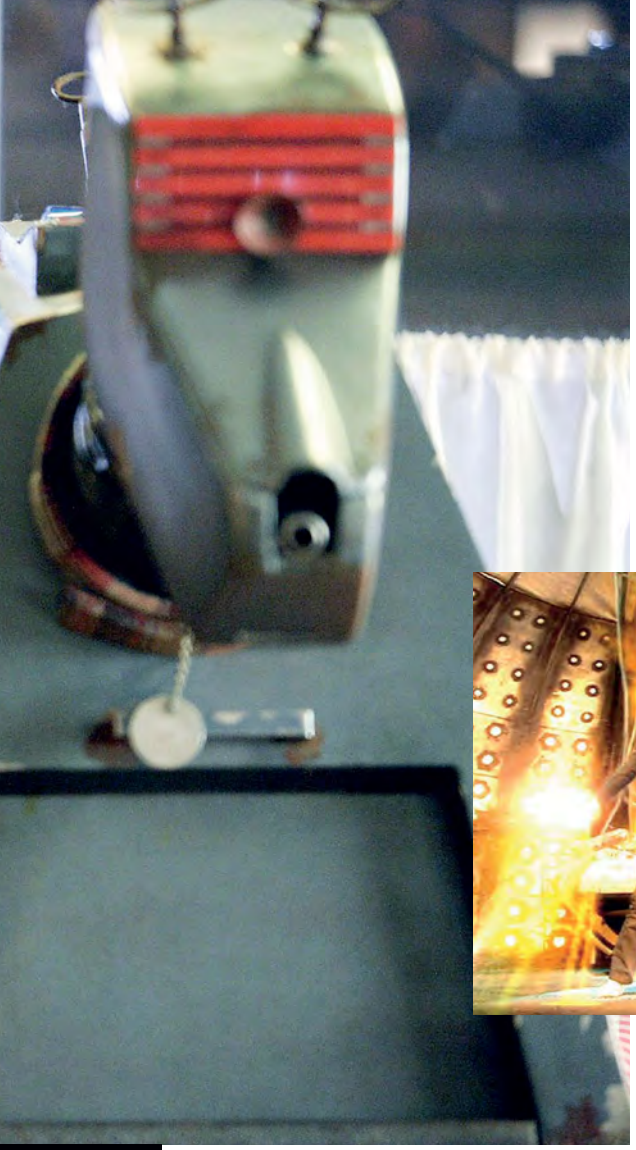


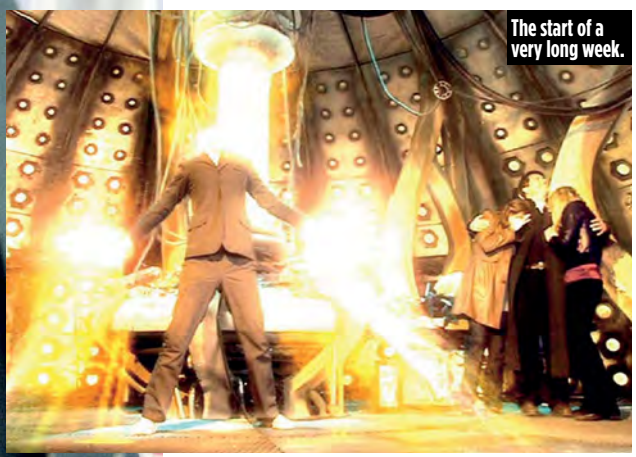
12 WIBBLY-WOBBLY, TIMEY-WIMEY

A revolution disguised as gibberish. "People assume that time is a strict progression of cause to effect," claimed the Tenth Doctor in Steven Moffat's "Blink", "but actually, from a non-linear, non-subjective viewpoint, it's more like a big ball of wibbly-wobbly, timey-wimey *stuff*..." Strange to think that throughout the first forty-odd years of *Doctor Who*'s history, time travel was either a cheap joke, or a cheaper get-out. But beginning with "The Girl In The Fireplace", and most obviously in the long-running saga of River Song, Moffat rewrote time travel itself: as grand tragedy, as low farce, as a trap... but always as something endlessly interesting and infinitely strange.

Has River's run yet to conclude?

13 "WE MUST NOT LOOK AT GOBLIN MEN..."

Necessity may have been its mother, but surely the only episode of *Doctor Who* braver than "Midnight" – a single-set stage play whose "monster" exists only in the form of repeated dialogue – is the freaky first instalment of "The Mind Robber" (1968). Unlike the freaky first instalment of "The Mind Robber", "Midnight" is actually really good, with a painfully unexpected pay-off. *Molto bene*.



The start of a very long week.

14 "HE'S DYING, AND YOU KNOW WHAT HAPPENS NEXT..."

Finally, the Tenth Doctor meets up again with Rose – only for a Dalek death ray to spoil their reunion. The Doctor's allies haul him inside the TARDIS – but it's too late: "I'm regenerating." Glowing with light, he braces himself... TO. BE. CONTINUED. After "The Stolen Earth", it seemed quite possible that Russell T might just have sprung the biggest, nastiest surprise ever on *Doctor Who*'s unsuspecting audience, giving us the only cliffhanger to become part of the national conversation – which is why the next week's "Journey's End" remains the only "standard", non-seasonal episode to top the TV charts. Call it a stunt if you must, but don't deny it wasn't the most effective "what happens next...?" in the programme's history.

15 *THE WRITER'S TALE*

Back in 1972, Piccolo Books published Malcolm Hulke's helpful, instructive and informative little volume, *The Making Of Doctor Who*. Reading through over 500 pages' worth of Russell T's emails to *Doctor Who Magazine* journalist Benjamin Cook, sent throughout the development and production of the 2008 season, feels entirely different; like industrial espionage, in fact!

16 FISH FINGERS AND CUSTARD

If Matt Smith had eaten such a vile concoction for his art – well, that'd have been understandable; mad, but with Method in it. But if you type "fish fingers" into Google, "and custard" comes top of the list of suggested searches, above "recipe", "calories", "healthy"...

This means that there are real people out there who, ever since "The Eleventh Hour" was on, have eaten fish fingers and custard for fun. Really. Fun.

17 FEZZES ARE...

Yes, and guess what comes top of suggested searches after "fezzes"...? That Steven Moffat has a lot to answer for.

18 "TEARS OF JOY"

If *Doctor Who* had only ever existed so that we could see Vincent Van Gogh transported into the modern-day Museé d'Orsay, to hear a bow tie-wearing art professor describe him as "the finest painter of them all", who "transformed the pain of his tormented life into ecstatic beauty" – for that alone, its 50-year history would have been worth it.

19 THE UNHOLY THREE

In Victorian London, a reptilian detective named Madame Vastra investigates uncanny cases with her wife, the swordmistress Jenny Flint, and their manservant, a lactating alien troll named Strax. But the greatest mystery about these three remains: why don't they have a spin-off series of their own?

20 HERE & NOW

So it came to this: the Twelfth Doctor unveiled in real time, before millions watching worldwide, in a special programme on BBC One on a Sunday night in August 2013. And he was Peter bloody Capaldi.

"Doctor Who Live"? More alive than ever. SFX

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WAR CHILD

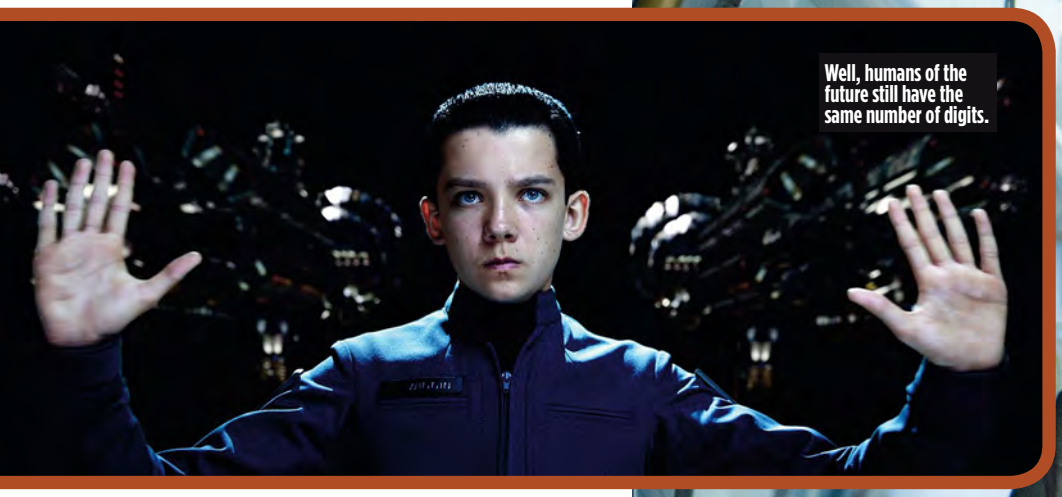
Author Orson Scott Card's views on gay marriage have turned Ender's Game into one of the most controversial films of the year. But, as director Gavin Hood tells Richard Edwards, there's a lot more to the movie than that

PLENTY OF GENRE MOVIES are accompanied by a bit of pre-release controversy. Usually it's pretty trivial in the grand scheme of things – maybe a beloved character is being played by the "wrong" actor, or there's been some unauthorised meddling with the chronology. The producers of the big-screen adaptation of Orson Scott Card's *Ender's Game* don't have it quite so easy, however. Their film will arrive in cinemas accompanied by genuine baggage, thanks to Card's derogatory (and much-publicised) remarks about homosexuality and gay marriage.

"I'm frustrated and disappointed in the views that Orson's espousing," says *Ender's Game* director Gavin Hood, who points out that Card's producer's credit is more contractual than hands-on. "I'm finding it very hard as a fan of the book because one of the key themes in the book is compassion and kindness and understanding towards – for want of a better word – another species, and the notion that these great themes and ideas that are in the book are not playing out in his personal life is confusing and distressing to me. The book was written when he was younger, and I read what he's saying now and what he said then and it's like I'm looking at two different people. My feeling is that this is one of those very strange and unfortunate situations, [when] art rises above the personal failings of its creators."

Although it's taken nearly 30 years to make it to the big screen, Card's 1985 novel is considered something of a classic, a Hugo Award-winning story that regularly features on American high school curriculums, and is required reading for candidates on US Marine officer training. The book has, however, long ↔

Director Gavin Hood with his young charges.



Well, humans of the future still have the same number of digits.

been considered unfilmable – it had spent years in development hell at Warner Bros, before an independent producer got their hands on the rights, and Hood (who'd earned his blockbuster spurs on *X-Men Origins: Wolverine*) became attached to the project as writer and director. For a filmmaker who'd been drafted into the South African army at the age of 17, the story of Andrew "Ender" Wiggin – a gifted kid recruited by the military to lead a war against the race of spacefaring bugs who'd nearly wiped out mankind decades earlier – felt incredibly relevant.

"I thought it was bizarre that it was about a young character and yet I was relating to it as an adult," Hood says. "How am I relating to these themes? They were obviously bringing up a great deal of emotional baggage from my own past in the military."

GROWING UP

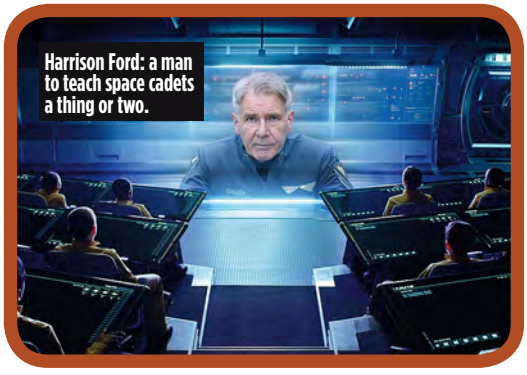
The ages of the characters have been increased from the novel (there Ender is just six when he's sent to the Earth-orbiting "Battle School"; in the film he's in his early teens), and the timescale of the story has been compressed. But otherwise the basic idea is the same. Ender is a genius, enlisted because he's capable of strategic thinking far beyond anyone else's capability, and he's subsequently pushed to (and beyond) his limits to guide his evolution into the general he must become. Consequently the boy's not always sweetness and light – when he's set upon by bullies, his coldly analytical brain reasons that the best thing to do is fight back with a short, sharp shock of aggression extreme enough to ensure he'll never be bullied again.

"What I love about the character of Ender Wiggin is that he is not a perfect kid, even though he's extremely smart," Hood explains. "I'm so bored with stories where a good character is wronged in some way and then has to set the world right. It's almost cliché."

Ender's military masters are fronted by Colonel Hyrum Graff, played by a star who'll forever be associated with outer space. *Ender's Game* is Harrison Ford's first trip to the stars since he last hung up Han Solo's waistcoat, and Hood says working with a sci-fi icon proved useful for Asa Butterfield, the young Brit bringing Wiggin to the screen. "There was something really heartwarming about the intimidation that Asa felt towards Harrison, the acting icon, which really helped me from a directing point of view," Hood reveals. "We shot in sequence so that Asa really could develop through the course of the movie and in the early phases he was very intimidated by Harrison Ford, and then gradually he was less so, which is a parallel for the story in the film."

If Graff represents "the man", Ender has an angel and demon sitting on his shoulders in the form of his older brother and sister. The three Wiggin kids all possess genius-level intelligence, but brother Peter's brains come mixed with a gift for sadistic cruelty, while sister Valentine is Ender's best friend, his sensitive confidante.

"Ender's aware that he's torn between his capacity for compassion and kindness as embodied by his sister and his equal and opposite capacity for violence and aggression as embodied by his brother," Hood explains. "I loved that because it speaks to us as a species. As human beings we're capable of acts of great kindness and compassion – and yet we can all turn a total blind eye to certain atrocities. That's the essence of the book that most interested me."



Harrison Ford: a man to teach space cadets a thing or two.

GOOD GUESSES

While the alien "Formics" remain thankfully confined to the realms of fantasy, other areas of the book provide an uncannily accurate view of the future. When *Ender's Game* was written, the remote warfare that's a major theme of the story was little more than science fiction, but these days, bombing missions carried out by drone aircraft flown by pilots sitting in front of a TV screen thousands of miles away are public knowledge.

"The book was very prescient in a number of areas, like the way it foresaw younger and younger people being used for computer game-type warfare because their reflexes are so much faster than adults," says Hood. "They don't hesitate the way we do – as you get more life experience you become more aware that if I do this it might have a real life consequence." Another of the book's spot-on predictions of the future sees Peter and Valentine blogging their way to political influence back on Earth, but Hood reveals that this plotline has been excised: "It was incredibly innovative in 1985," Hood explains, "but is now sort of ubiquitous, everybody blogs, so it seemed to me that we're already living that version of the future."

Fans of the novel will be pleased to know, however, that the Battle Room, the giant zero-gravity arena where Ender and his classmates hone their strategy skills, is all present and correct. Indeed, it sounds like it could be a big-screen sport to rival Quidditch – and therefore a logistical nightmare to get on screen.

"I think we're lucky that we're at a point now where, with a combination of brilliant stunt performing and computer generated

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Hold on tight: *Ender's Game* might get a rocky reception.

"THE BOOK – AND I HOPE THE FILM – IN NO WAY CONDESCENDS TO YOUNG PEOPLE, IT TREATS THEM AS THINKING INDIVIDUALS"

imagery, that we really can render them all," Hood explains. "But I wanted to take the Battle Room to another level visually from the book, where it takes place in a dark room. I remember saying to my production designer, 'This dark room is killing me, let's put it in a big glass orb so we can see out into space and feel what it's like to have the stars out there.'"

With spectacle all-but-assured in a big-budget Hollywood sci-fi movie, Hood reiterates that it's the film's themes that should resonate most – and that just because it's targeting a young audience doesn't mean you have to leave your brain in the cinema foyer.

"I think kids are way smarter than we give them credit for, and they're also at that critical point as teenagers where they're really questioning things," the director says. "What I love about the book – and I hope the film – is that it in no way condescends to young people, it treats them as thinking individuals. So yes, this is a film aimed at young people, but that's what so thrilling about it, because these are the very questions that young people need to be asking themselves." SFX

Ender's Game is released by Entertainment One on Friday 25 October.

PLAYER OF GAMES

Asa Butterfield, aka Ender Wiggin, talks blasting off into space

What were your first impressions of Ender when you read the book?
He's not your classic hero. He isn't all perfect, and as with every human he has his darker side. That was one of the things I really liked about the story. He's always faced with this internal struggle – is he like his brother, is he like his sister? Gavin also wanted to keep the themes and the ideas intact, whether it was about leadership or sending children into space – into war even – and what is right and what is wrong, and whether to benefit everyone you can do something that horrible. All of those ideas were evident 30 years ago when the book was written, they're evident now and I'm sure they'll be evident 50 years from now.

There are some obvious changes from the book – notably the fact that Ender is older. Do you think the film is a faithful adaptation?
One of the things Gavin and I both really wanted to do is keep it as true to the novel as possible, because we want to entice new people to the story but we also wanted to please the die-hard fans. I think the changes work, and they were all done for obvious reasons. You can't find a six-year-old that can do the things that you'd need them to do in the story, and if you did have a six-year-old doing those things then the film would probably be an 18 – it probably wouldn't even be legal!

Did you have to go through a boot camp before shooting the movie?
Yeah, that was for about two or three weeks. We were also taught how to march and salute and do all those things you would do in a military school. It was hard, but it was all very helpful, because it's how it would be. Just because we're actors doesn't mean we're covered in cotton wool.

Ender's forced to be something of a loner. Did you go Method and keep yourself to yourself on set?
At times I had to be quite Method, especially for some of the more emotional scenes, but generally between shots we would have a laugh and got on really well. I didn't do anything outside of the film to affect the character.

With *Hugo* and *Ender's Game*, you've worked with some really big names – including Harrison Ford on this film. Do you ever get starstruck?
At first I did, but I think I've gotten used to it, and accepted the fact that I'm in this world now and I need to be professional – even if I do see Angelina Jolie walk past, I'm not allowed to squeal. But it was amazing working with Harrison Ford. I was slightly nervous at first – who wouldn't be? – but by the end of it we got on really well, and I learned so much.

Following *Merlin* and *Hugo*, Asa Butterfield adds to his genre CV.

BROUGHT TO COOK

THE SFX WRITER INTERVIEW

Adam Nevill

One of the new voices in horror fiction tells *SFX* how terror got hold of him young

WORDS BY JONATHAN WRIGHT ● PORTRAIT BY TANIA GLYDE

The influence of early exposure to *Doctor Who* never really goes away. Back in the 1970s, Adam Nevill first encountered the Tom Baker-era story "The Talons Of Weng-Chiang", a creepy tale of Victorian London and people getting their life essences pinched. Despite featuring a giant rat later described by historian Dominic Sandbrook as "one of the worst-realised monsters ... in the history of human entertainment", the story induced terror in the future novelist.

It's a memory that helped to fuel Nevill's latest novel, *House Of Small Shadows*. "It's a book on the borderland of nightmare and memory, a folk horror novel and an alternative British history of the grotesque," he says. "Everything I've found eerie and morbid from the medieval to the Tudor, the Victorian and the Edwardian periods, I let flow into this story. And this is the first time I've really concentrated on the first few years of my remembered life, in the 1970s – imaginings, curiosities, fears."

Telling the story of a woman, Catherine, who leaves London to work on a project to catalogue a collection of dolls, puppets and, most weirdly of all, preserved animals dressed in costumes and posed to recreate scenes from World War Two, it's not a novel for those of a nervous disposition. For anyone who's read Nevill's previous books – *Banquet For The Damned*, *Apartment 16*, *The Ritual* and *Last Days* – this won't come entirely as a surprise.

Again, we can go back to Nevill's childhood for clues as to why he's chosen to specialise in the genre of things that go bump in the night. When he was a child, his father read Nevill and his brother classic ghost stories by the likes of MR James. "These stories made a huge impact on my imagination," Nevill says. "Ever since the strangeness, the mystery and mysticism, the eldritch lore, the sense of brushing against something vast and inexplicable has always rung my bell. The compulsion to recreate this has never left me. It grows stronger and won't release me."

It's also collided with an adult take on the world that might politely be described as glass half-empty. Or perhaps half-filled with bile and blood. "When I look at the world, and the nature of our species throughout history, I wonder why every writer isn't writing horror," Nevill says. "Because we are horror, and existence is horror for most people on this planet. And for all of us, life will be horror at one time or another."

So where did this worldview stem from? To go again back to Nevill's childhood, there's a sense of displacement as he describes moving from New Zealand back to his native Brum, an experience that he says made an "outsider" of him. "I had a Huck Finn childhood, barefoot in a national reserve by the ocean," he remembers. "Idyllic really. I roamed and so did my imagination. But when we moved, I was like a child from the 1950s dropped into 1980s Birmingham."

"For all of us, life will be horror at one time or another"

The culture shock had presumably abated by 1997, when Nevill took an MA in creative writing at St Andrews. "I never doubted my imagination or ideas, but anyone who's ever written anything will know that is the easy part," he says. "I needed mentors to help me be a better writer, to improve the actual writing."

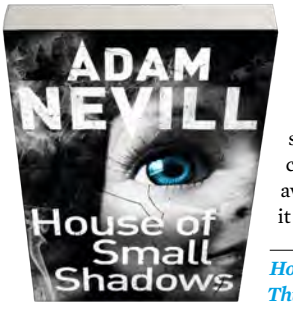
The experience also gave him a setting for his first novel, *Banquet Of The Damned*, an occult thriller initially released via PS Publishing in 2004. Two years later, after having previously been "turned down by every agent in the *Writers' & Artists' Yearbook*", agent John Jarrold took on the job of selling Nevill's wares. "He told me I'd have at least a three-year wait for a publisher," he says. "After exactly three years he negotiated a two-book deal with a major publisher, Pan Macmillan, after a publishing auction."

Life's been easier since. Indeed, says Nevill, he could have gone full-time as a writer in 2009, but thanks to "innate cautiousness, learned the hard way" he still works from home part-time for HarperCollins as a publisher of "erotica and erotic romance". The best thing about not working in an office, he says, is getting to spend time with his daughter.

How might things have gone had Nevill been trying to get ahead in the digital publishing era, when there seems to be a mini-horror boom?

"Bizarrely, I think it was paranormal romance that put horror back on publishers' radars around 2006 – Meyer, Harris and co," he says. "Traditional spectres in cross-genre books became hugely popular, and Max Brookes wrote the brilliant precursor, *World War Z*, which created another new sub-genre in zombies around the same time. It was a small step to the left for publishing to begin considering straight supernatural horror fiction aimed at adults."

However we explain the new spotlight on horror, the gifted Nevill has been one of the main beneficiaries. He'd clearly like to see more horror novelists following on. "Only poets and writers of Westerns have had it as bad as we who have written horror in the shadows," he says. "Serial killer crime, in my opinion, twinned with conservative corporate publishing, took the readership away from horror. But if it is published as a big deal again, it will be a big deal again." SFX



House Of Small Shadows will be released by Pan on Thursday 10 October.

BIODATA

- **OCCUPATION:** Novelist
- **BORN:** 1969
- **FROM:** Birmingham
- **GREATEST HITS:** Haunted house tale *Apartment 16* established Nevill as a name in Brit horror.
- **RANDOM FACT:** Films are a huge influence on Nevill. Writing wilderness story *The Ritual*, he says, he saw it as a cross between *Deliverance* and *The Blair Witch Project*.

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TIME MACHINE

THE STORY BEHIND THE SF AND FANTASY OF YESTERYEAR

1987

Masters Of The Universe

"By the power of Grayskull..." Calum Waddell looks back at the trials and tribulations of adapting a toy line to the big screen

PRIOR TO ITS RELEASE in August 1987 it was heralded as "the *Star Wars* of the 1980s" by Cannon Films. And, for any child of the time who had spent their pocket money on a bevy of tacky, barely-moveable, plastic-fantastic toy models, *Masters Of The Universe* was the must-see movie of the summer period. Following in the footsteps of the He-Man phenomenon, which included a hit animated series, trading cards, an action figure line, comic books and tie-in clothing galore, the under-ten mob was positively *psyched* to check out the bicep-ridden beefcake of star Dolph Lundgren channelling the energy of Eternia's finest. Yet, to the surprise of many, *Masters Of The Universe* was a certified disaster – debuting as the third highest grossing film in the United States before quickly dropping off the chart altogether and languishing in the bargain bins of many a faded VHS rental store.

The reason?

Quite possibly that kids are no fools.

Word soon started to surface that this version of He-Man included few of the characters that had cemented themselves as central to the whole *Masters* mythology. Gone were such essential small-screen staples as Battle Cat, He-Man's impossibly domesticated pet tiger, Orko, the friendly, floating magician, and Hordak – the megalomaniac master-villain who often made Skeletor look like a big girl's blouse. In their place were, erm, Courteney Cox as a cute teenage waitress who joins He-Man and chums in their battle against the baddies, a heroic Tolkien-inspired dwarf called Gwildor and a trio of new protagonists at the side of Skeletor and his perennial female lackey Evil-Lyn. No, we would not get to see Dolph Lundgren channel "the power of Grayskull" in his metamorphosis from Prince Adam to He-Man, avenger of the people. Instead, we would witness a "new" story which swapped intergalactic mystique for laser-gun battles in the centre of Los Angeles.

"It's okay – we *will* be as big as *Star Wars!*"

NEW FACES

Directed by first-time filmmaker – and ardent comic book buff – Gary Goddard, and scripted by David Odell (who had previously penned the Jim Henson gem *The Dark Crystal*), *Masters Of The Universe* opens with Skeletor presiding over his capture of Castle Grayskull. He-Man, Man-at-Arms and Teela (two of the other holdovers from the original mythology) are on the run and, thanks to a mystical key, they escape to Earth. From here it's the usual good guys vs bad guys bombast – although exactly *why* Cannon opted to not draw on any of the cartoon and toy line's most familiar faces is anyone's guess...

"I was aware of He-Man, of course, but I had not watched the cartoon so I didn't know about the stories or any of the other characters," admits Meg Foster, the actress cast as Evil-Lyn in the movie. "In fact, it was only when it came out that I learned the fans had been upset by what the movie did. I mean, here we were – leaving Eternia and bringing He-Man and his sidekicks ↔

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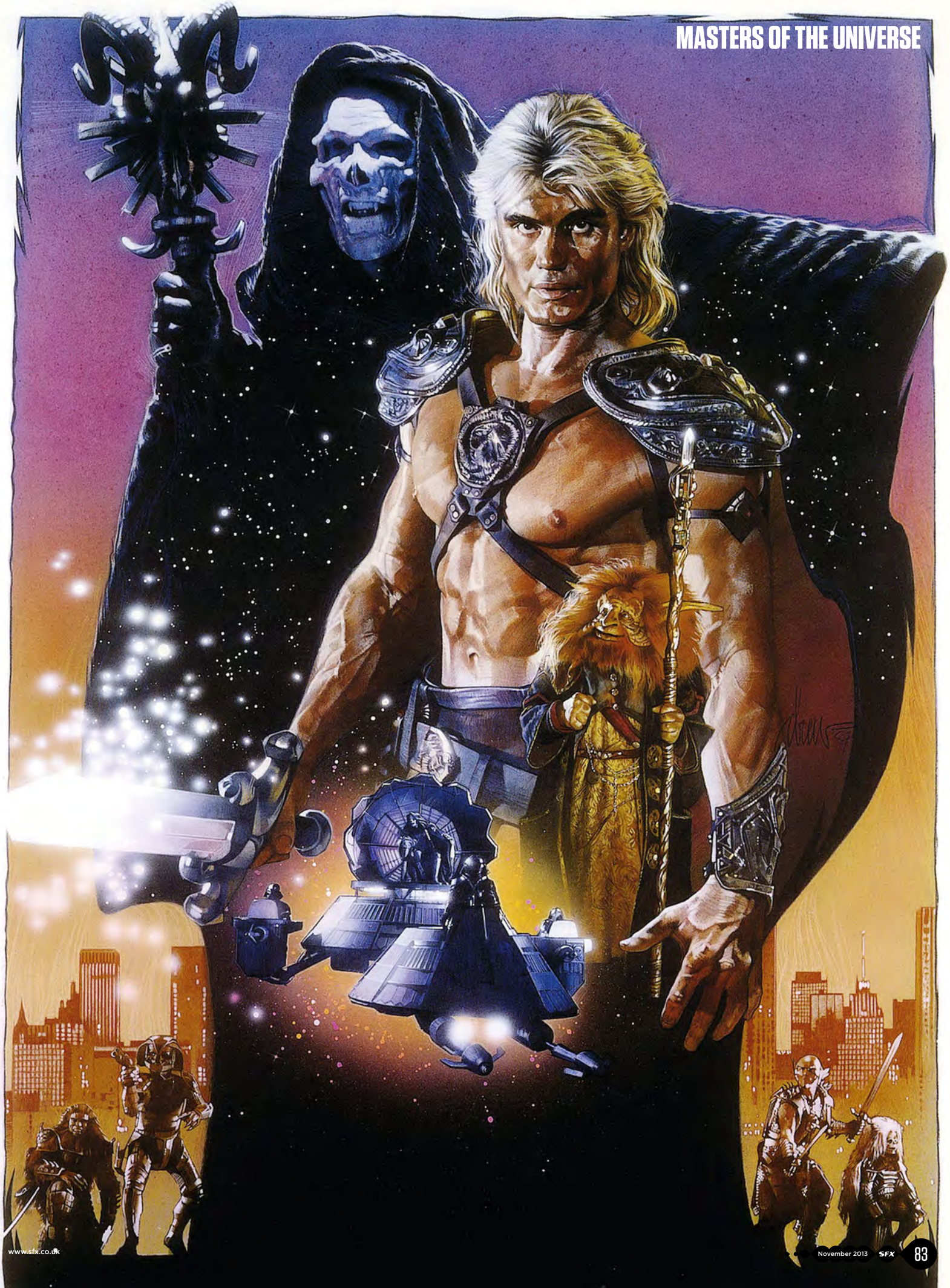

HE-MAN'S NOT SO MERRY MINIONS

While die-hard He-Man hordes have long discussed the lack of Teela's flesh-flaunting costume and the unconventional design of Beast Man in the *Masters Of The Universe* movie, let's spare a thought for some of the Eternia-dwellers who never got to the big screen. Like Buzz Off, the colourful half-man, half-bee, all-winged creature who acts as a spy for He-Man, or how about Stinkor, the skunk-mutation whose action figure smelled rather like a cheap Asda-own brand perfume as opposed to anything particularly heinous? Yet, for pure comic book cream-of-the-crap we'd have adored seeing the filmmakers integrate Fisto into their plot. One of He-Man's trusted troops, Fisto was nonetheless a preposterous and pointless personality whose sole claim to fame was a big metal fist. Titter ye not...

Chelsea Field as Teela: less flesh on display than the toy version.

At least the movie kept good old Skeletor.

to Earth. It was a very different take on everything and it's only now that I understand how much it upset the purists. But I never researched any of this before the shoot – all I knew is that I was having a great time making this big sci-fi film [laughs]."

Indeed, over 25 years later and *Masters Of The Universe* can finally be reappraised as a campy, swashbuckling, feel-good bout of sweaty-silliness which stands among Cannon's more memorable movies. Despite the still-prevalent sense that, yes, the narrative would have been far better served with a few more familiar faces in the cast, there is still a lot to like here. The special effects hold their own, the set design is spectacular and the John Williams sound-alike score hits all of the right notes (pun intended). Furthermore, theatre darling, and future Oscar nominee, Frank Langella knowingly hams it up as Skeletor – a rare instance, at that time, of a more "serious" thespian letting his guard down in a snarling, pantomime performance.

"Frank is one of the greatest actors in the world," enthuses Foster. "I think a lot of people were surprised that he signed on for *Masters Of The Universe* but he was having a lot of fun under all of that make-up. He even told me towards the end of the shoot that this had been one of his most enjoyable film experiences. I played against him in almost every scene he had. I remember saying to him, 'I don't really see Evil-Lyn as villainous – she is just doing her job and she knows how to get results, even if it means being harsh.' He agreed with that – he saw her as this female who was more committed to Skeletor's cause than any man in Eternia, which is why she is so obsessive around him – she is slightly lovelorn."

LIVING TOY

While Langella and, especially, Foster (who channels a little Lady Macbeth) are a blast to watch, their co-star, Dolph Lundgren, seems to be in a bit over his head. Although Lundgren would grow into a charismatic and likeable action star, *Masters Of The Universe* was his first leading role and, despite his superhuman physique, it's clear that the actor is struggling to shrug off the surreal situation of bringing a child's toy to life. Hardly surprising, then, that he would later comment disdainfully on the movie – even labelling it as his least favourite film role.

"Dolph is a lovely guy and this was a tough situation for him," says Foster. "He is a very intelligent man – he has a genius IQ, a master's degree in chemical engineering and muscles up to his eyeballs [laughs].

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THE KIRBY INFLUENCE

Since the release of *Masters Of The Universe*, director Gary Godard has gone on record to confirm the work of Jack Kirby, and in particular his work on *New Gods* as well as such Marvel staples as *Thor* and *Fantastic Four*, as a big influence on the movie. Just as these groundbreaking comic books featured otherworldly conflicts expanding to Earth, or other parallel worlds, *Masters Of The Universe* takes the idea of moving the He-Man mythology into a more grounded scenario and bringing the character to contemporary America. Curiously, Godard would also reveal after-the-fact that he attempted to bring Kirby onboard as the conceptual artist for *Masters Of The Universe*. Ah, what could have been...

"Heads I get to the barber's first, tails you do."

Meg Foster as Evil-Lyn – sister of Nasty Beryl?

The Sorceress arrived dressed as a Christmas decoration.

Um, bit of S&M fun, anyone?

However, *Masters Of The Universe* arrived at the start of his career. He had done *Rocky IV* just before it, but this was a huge opportunity for him – it was his first leading role and he was taking it very seriously. Everyone knows who he is now but back then he was still quite obscure. Even he didn't know where his career was going and here he was – playing a real-life action figure and wearing next to nothing every day."

Thankfully, Lundgren had a reliable supporting cast to play against. Foster would eventually become a genre staple following her leading lady turn in *They Live* (1988) although at this point she was most famous for being the original Cagney in the *Cagney & Lacey* TV series. Her female adversary Chelsea Field (playing a curiously unglamorous Teela, one of the cartoon's sexiest sprites) would go on to become a feted "Scream Queen" while Jon Cypher – who is well cast as the easygoing Man-at-Arms – was known from the hit television series *Hill Street Blues*.

BIG BUDGET BLUES

That said, it's the special effects which are the real star of the show – including a citywide chase in a jet-speeder, a stylish blaster-battle inside Castle Grayskull, a swashbuckling finale and some larger than life sets...

"I think this was Cannon's most expensive project," continues Foster. "There was no expense spared – the word from up top was that they believed this would be the new *Star Wars*. And the costumes were just amazing. I have been told ever since that I had one of the sexiest costumes in all of sci-fi [laughs]. However, they gave me fake breasts. I have big blue eyes but no boobs so they had to do something about that [laughs]. As a result, I had this cleavage attached to my costume. They were so sweet about telling me this – no one wanted to offend me, but I just found it funny. And it's fascinating because I've read reviews which claim I am wearing contact lenses – but in fact that *is* my real eyes: they are just very, very pale blue. In fact, at one point I think we discussed Evil-Lyn actually wearing lenses to make her pupils just a little bit darker but we decided against that. They also gave me a little crown which I adored. My sole regret is that I wanted Evil-Lyn to have large hair but they decided against that. I think my hair in the film is a little more like what the cartoon character wore."

"In retrospect I suppose we were not quite 'the next *Star Wars*'"

Unfortunately, *Masters Of The Universe* would be one of the final nails in the coffin of Cannon Films. Already in debt due to a succession of costly capers which went belly-up at the box office (including fantasy-farce *Lifeforce* and the stillborn sequel *Superman IV*), Cannon would call it quits only a couple of years after He-Man proved less than muscular at global cinemas. Nevertheless, *Masters Of The Universe* lives on – both as a campy cult classic and as a reminder of how *not* to adapt a cash-cow cartoon to the big screen (ie don't change everything).

"I remember that it came out with all of this anticipation," says Foster. "In retrospect I suppose we were not quite 'the next *Star Wars*' [laughs]. But I have no regrets about making it. At the time I had never done anything aimed specifically at children – and I had a little son – so *Masters Of The Universe* was very important and personal to me in that regard. It's interesting because, although the critics tore us apart at the time, I did a fan convention recently which was all about celebrating He-Man and I signed so many autographs it was unbelievable! So I think that even some of the die-hard Eternia fans have come to enjoy the movie for what it is: a great little sci-fi movie that never takes itself too seriously." SFX

PENNY DREADFUL

What's happening in the world of horror movies this month...

This month I'm mourning minuscule attention spans. *Sharknado* is all the rage but is it *really* any good? Anthologies are everywhere, but is more necessarily better? And Brad Anderson still doesn't know how to end a movie – check out *The Call* for proof. Instead revisit proper grot (*Deranged*), a perfect portmanteau (*Creepshow*) and four pin sharp parodies from before *Scary Movie* ruined them...

Halle Berry gets grounded in *The Call*.

DREADFUL THING TO DO

Tickets for Sheffield horrorfest Celluloid Screams are on sale now. The 'fest runs from the 25–27 October in the Showroom Cinema, boasting premieres, guest appearances and all-nighters. First films announced include unborn baby/reality TV creep out *Delivery*, zombiecom *The Battery* (which I've heard good things about) and super-smart Israeli 'venger, *Big Bad Wolves*. Head to celluloidscreams.co.uk for tickets and full line-up.

GEIN AGAIN

My local pound shop sells books on serial killers. So I bought one on Ed Gein (along with a kitchen knife, some cable ties and a roll of bin bags, for a laugh – best £4 I ever spent). It is of course rubbish. But I did like having it as a "cheat sheet" when I was watching *Deranged* (out now), one of the less well known movies about Gein's case (as opposed to *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre*, *The Silence Of The Lambs* and *Psycho*). It's from *Children Shouldn't Play With Dead Things* director Jeff Gillen and it deserves some love, if only for the horribleness of the "brain scoop" scene – this is make-up maestro Tom Savini's second outing, and it oozes with icky flair.

In *Deranged*, mummy's boy Gein digs up his dead ma then uses bits of other corpses to give her a sort of skin makeover before moving onto fresher meat. It doesn't have the visceral power of *Chain Saw* but it's certainly grubby and shocking while the Brechtian motif of a news reporter popping up to frame and contextualise the story is a constant reminder for those who don't have a pound shop book to hand that at least some of this actually happened. Underrated.

ONE MISSED OPPORTUNITY

Someone needs to have a word with Brad Anderson about endings. His latest, *The Call* (out 20 September) is thrilling and fascinating: Halle Berry plays a 911 operator who takes a panicked call from Abigail Breslin who's trapped in the car boot of a murderer on the freeway and talks her through some sensible actions (kick out the tail light, wave your hand until someone else calls 911 etc) while the city police force rallies round to try to find them. Original, intelligent and Berry and Breslin are brilliant. Trouble is the ending is idiotic – illogical, tonally insane, belongs in a completely different (terrible) movie. For my money his *Vanishing On 7th Street* and *The Machinist* also had weak endings. Next up he's got Edgar Allen Poe adap *Eliza Graves* with Kate Beckinsale. Expect two thirds genius followed by a massive slap in the face.

MOTHS AND GOTHS

"A chillingly atmospheric horror story with real emotional depth" which "re-works and updates the gothic tradition and the whole notion of girl-on-girl vampires," says *American Psycho* director Mary Harron optimistically, of her YA novel adap *The Moth Diaries* (out 16 September). It's a modern teenage take on Sheridan Le Fanu's *Carmilla* and it ain't that great. Sarah Bolger plays Rebecca whose close bond with her best friend Lucy (Sarah Gadon) is threatened when mysterious, ethereal, Ernessa (Lily Cole) joins the school. The story's not new, and the modern nods – playing *Guitar Hero* and discussing what first sex would be like – jar embarrassingly, though the three leads carry it and there are occasional moments of mysticism and eroticism that shine. No doubt there was extra expectation of Harron post-*American Psycho* (which I never loved – not biting or funny enough as a satire, never truly disturbing like the book), while the fact that she's a woman making a horror/fantasy about women added extra weight. Best to leave both expectations in the bagging area. *The Moth Diaries* isn't troublesome gender-

ILLUSTRATIONS BY STEPHEN COLLINS

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Unpredictable weather in *The Moth Diaries*.

politically it just doesn't do much horror-cinematically.

COLLECTORS' ITEMS

Possibly my favourite anthology of all time, *Creepshow*, is heading to Blu-ray (28 October). It's written by Stephen King, directed by George Romero and there's even a cameo from a young Joe Hill (*Horns* author, son of King). I fell in love with this as a kid because it was everything I wanted from Halloween horror – inventive, imaginative, funny shorts with monsters and ghosts that I could share with my friends. Proper fireside stuff: "Did you hear about the man who found a meteorite? You know that beach house? Well that once belonged to rich old Mr Vickers who caught his wife cheating and took his revenge..." Gorgeous. Anthologies are on the rise again. *The ABCs Of Death 2* is in production, *V/H/S 2* is out next month and Brit sex 'n' death three-parter *Little Deaths* is out now. Also if you're a fan of very short-shorts (and lots of them), check out the *Shortcuts To Hell* anthology comprising 26 of the best from the recent comp run by Movie Mogul (Blinkbox and iTunes have it). ADD delights.

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@SFXPennyD

ANYONE THINK "SPIDER-BEAR" WOULD WORK?

So the world is ablaze with *Sharknado* (out on DVD 7 October, in case you missed it). Despite the fact that it was made for telly, by The Asylum, and stars Tara Reid, it's gained mad levels of notoriety and earned itself a sequel (*Sharknado: The Second One*). On the plus side, this is at least original filmmaking. On the downside I'm not so sure it's quality filmmaking. Still, there's clearly a taste for title-over-content horror. If this is your bag, keep your eye out for *The Disco Exorcist*, *Ghost Shark*, or most terrifying of all: *Ginger Clown*, all on their way to a DVD bin near you...

Px

DREADFUL NIGHT IN

***A Haunted House* and *Scary Movie 5* exist. This month's movie marathon revisits horror spoofs which were *actually* funny**

6.00pm

Gather popcorn, but NOT nachos. A glass of red, but NOT a vat of Coke. Prepare to smile wryly, then giggle wildly.

6.30pm

THE FEARLESS VAMPIRE KILLERS

Roman Polanski, 1967

Polanski lightened up with a fairytale satire on '60s Hammer where an eminent bat researcher and his apprentice (played by Polanski himself) travel to an old Transylvanian castle where they meet Count Von Krolock. Not hilarious but playful and stylish.

8.05pm

CARRY ON SCREAMING

Gerald Thomas, 1966

Broad, slapstick, innuendo-rife but still charming and mildly creepy, it's a spoof rife with Mummys, dummys, monsters and mannequins made with a love of the genre, bringing Universal monsters to a vague House Of Wax like plot.

9.45pm

STUDENT BODIES

Mickey Rose, 1981

B-movie slasher parody where a killer called The Breather phones up and knocks off promiscuous blondes while delivering one liners. Suffers from post-*Scream* self-awareness fatigue now but wins points for being inventive and quick off the mark.

11.15pm

YOUNG FRANKENSTEIN

Mel Brooks, 1974

The cream of horror parody, packed with sweetness and subtlety as well as big laughs and setpieces. With props (and plot points) reused from the 1931 James Whale original, Gene Wilder stars as the grandson of Victor Frankenstein. Completely brilliant.

1.05am

If you're blue and you don't know where to go to why don't you go where fashion sits? "Puttin' on the Ritz!" Dreadful dreams!

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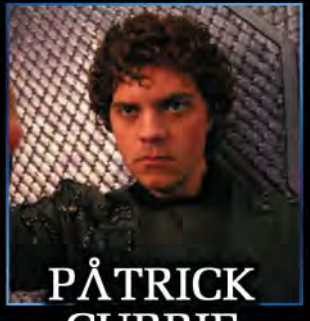

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TV REVIEWS AND OPINION!

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YOUR TV LEAGUE

It's the championship table of this month's best TV episodes, based on your votes on our website!

1 **CONTINUUM** 2.13 "Second Time" **(Your score: 4.749)**
2 **CONTINUUM** 2.10 "Second Wave" **(Your score: 4.725)**
3 **SUPERNATURAL** 8.11 "LARP And The Real Girl" **(Your score: 4.611)**
4 **SUPERNATURAL** 8.13 "Everybody Hates Hitler" **(Your score: 4.605)**
5 **SUPERNATURAL** 8.12 "As Time Goes By" **(Your score: 4.579)**
6 **SUPERNATURAL** 8.10 "Torn And Frayed" **(Your score: 4.524)**
7 **ONCE UPON A TIME** 2.17 "Welcome To Storybrooke" **(Your score: 4.418)**
8 **CONTINUUM** 2.11 "Second Guess" **(Your score: 4.321)**
9 **SUPERNATURAL** 8.09 "Citizen Fang" **(Your score: 4.309)**
10 **SUPERNATURAL** 8.14 "Trial And Error" **(Your score: 4.268)**

THIS MONTH'S STINKER
SUPERNATURAL 8.15 "Man's Best Friend With Benefits" **(Your score: 3.382)**

Scores are based on reader poll votes at the *SFX* website taken after the episodes' first UK airing. This month's period for episode scores was between Monday 29 July and Sunday 25 August 2013.

BROADCAST SEASON SIX WILL AIR ON FOX IN THE UK FROM 30 SEPTEMBER

Gods And Monsters

TRUE BLOOD: Season six in classic *SFX* Scriptease format...

PREVIOUSLY ON TRUE BLOOD...
Bill drank Lilith's blood, died in a puddle of goo, then re-emerged as Billith, complete with superpowers and hairy merkin.
ACT ONE
BILLITH acts like a GOD. SOOKIE STAKES HIM and he DOESN'T DIE.
BILLITH [tortured]: Lilith has a plan for me, but I do not know what it is!
SOOKIE: Well, it sure ain't dyin'!
BILLITH [tortured]: I am going to have a vision of three naked women. Perhaps they will tell me what to do.
MALE AUDIENCE: Naked women, fantastic! The NAKED WOMEN are covered in BLOOD and wearing MERKINS.
MALE AUDIENCE: Hey, this isn't fair!
ACT TWO
While trying to find WARLOW, the vampire who killed their parents, SOOKIE and JASON meet RUTGER HAUER.
RUTGER HAUER: My name is Niall and I'm your faerie grandfather.
JASON: Do you know where Warlow is?
RUTGER HAUER: No, but I know he's evil and despicable and needs to die!
SOOKIE stumbles across a faerie who has been attacked by a VAMPIRE. He's CUTE and COULDN'T HURT A FLY.
THE AUDIENCE: Bet that's Warlow.
WARLOW: I'm Warlow.
THE AUDIENCE: Called it.
ACT THREE
ANDY's FAERIE CHILDREN grow up impossibly fast. Meanwhile, JESSICA is trying to help BILLITH.
JESSICA: I love you, father, and I will use that love to keep you human and stop you hurting people, I promise! Wait... what's that great smell? JESSICA MASSACRES all but one of ANDY'S CHILDREN.
BILLITH: You were saying?
ACT FOUR
VAMPIRES are being taken to a compound where they are STUDIED by HUMANS.
THE AUDIENCE: Didn't they do this on *Buffy*?
THE WRITERS: Shh.
The INITIATIVE is being led by GOVERNOR BURRELL, who really hates VAMPIRES.
ERIC: We should turn Burrell's daughter.

FACT ATTACK!

- Despite his fiery demise, executive producer Brian Buckner says: "Eric Northman will be back next summer."
- For anyone wondering, yes, that was Alexander Skarsgård's real Scandinavian sausage in his full-frontal scene.
- Season six earned a lot of flak from critics for its uninspiring wolf pack storylines. They'll be toned down next season.

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TALES OF WAR FROM THE GRIM DARKNESS OF THE FAR FUTURE
blacklibrary.com

The girls were going for a very specific "bloody" look with their make-up.

WILLA BURRELL: Yes, turn me, sexy vampire!
ERIC: You've read *Twilight*, haven't you?
WILLA [looking shifty]: Maybe.
ERIC turns her. BURRELL is furious, but then BILLITH RIPS HIS HEAD OFF.
ACT FIVE
SOOKIE and WARLOW have sex because he says he only KILLED HER PARENTS to SAVE HER LIFE. Elsewhere, TERRY dies.
ERIC: My sister is dead. I'm going to break into the compound and rip everybody to pieces, starting with this guy's meat 'n' two veg.
THE AUDIENCE: OH DEAR GOD, YOU'VE FINALLY GONE TOO FAR!
BILLITH stamps on THE GUY'S HEAD.
THE AUDIENCE: Oh wait, never mind.
ACT SIX
All the VAMPIRES are freed and can walk in DAYLIGHT. SOOKIE fights with WARLOW and NIALL saves her. NAKED ERIC is sunbathing.
FEMALE AUDIENCE: Naked Eric! Fantastic!
ERIC catches FIRE and BURNS UP.
THE FEMALE AUDIENCE: Hey, this isn't fair!
Now it's SIX MONTHS LATER.
THE AUDIENCE: What the f***?
SOOKIE and ALCIDE are together, SAM is MAYOR and BILL is a TV STAR.
THE AUDIENCE: What the f***?
SICK VAMPIRES are roaming in packs like ZOMBIES. They gather to attack BON TEMPS.
THE AUDIENCE: What the f***? And also, why has season seven started halfway through the final episode of season six?
THE WRITERS: Because f*** you, that's why!
THE AUDIENCE: <<weeps>>
ENDS Jayne Nelson

MINDPROBE

Dean Norris

Breaking Bad's Hank goes *Under The Dome*

Can you describe your character Big Jim's relationship with the Dome?
He just sees the Dome as an opportunity to realise his dictatorial ambitions. A lot of people sing in the shower, I think Big Jim recites Churchill speeches. And hopes one day he'll get his shot. He thinks he's doing something that's right for the town, and at times he is, but at the end of the day he's figuring out ways to consolidate his power.

How do you feel about the Dome?
The Dome is very friendly when I work with it. It keeps giving, giving. The Dome and I, we're like that [crosses fingers].

Can you hint at what's next?
One of the things that people in our creative team have brought from shows like *Lost* is the mystery. We carry that down to the cast. They paint in broad strokes for us, they give us little snippets looking ahead, but I couldn't tell you exactly where I'm ending up, because it's a moving target. Which is part of the fun of the journey.

Were you familiar with the story beforehand?
I hadn't read the book, but my wife had, and she briefed me on what it was about. But it's an allegorical show too. It's not just "What would happen if a Dome went up over your city?" Because it's never going to happen [laughs]. But as an allegory... You can start to understand how people react to crises. And as the Dome takes on a greater character, which it does, then it really becomes interesting. Who put it there? Is it good? Is it bad? We start to look at that, and that makes the whole thing more complex.
Joseph McCabe

Under The Dome airs on Channel 5 on Monday nights at 10pm.

Thor on a tractor. A trac-thor, if you will.

BROADCAST NEW ZEALAND: FINISHED AIRING ON TV3, UK: AIRS WEDNESDAYS AT 10PM ON SYFY

God Botherers

THE ALMIGHTY JOHNSONS: Courting controversy

MY MUM ALWAYS TOLD ME not to talk about sex, politics or religion in company. Good advice for a quiet life... advice which I routinely overlook now I'm old enough to host my own dinner parties, and which New Zealand's answer to *Heroes* has thankfully also chosen to ignore. The show (in which Axl Johnson discovers he and his brothers are host to reincarnated Norse gods with various accompanying powers) has now jettisoned the men-vs-women shtick which dominated the first season, and barely mentions the McGuffin quest for Odin's true love Frigg, instead tackling more social issues. So far the third season has seen the bigot Derek (Thor) confronting his homophobia, Colin (Loki) running for mayor, Michelle (Sjöfn) turning into a reluctant faith healer, and the local Christians murderously turning on the rival gods. It's brave of the series to portray the Norse gods as the real ones; the churchgoers only start concentrating on "the J-man" again once Anders (Bragi, god of poetry), brainwashes them. Wonder how that will go down on the US networks?

These are big topics and the show handles them with its trademark irreverence, an approach that is at times uncomfortable. It's hard to create a sympathetic character out of a fat, drunken redneck who yells "arse bandits" at a same-sex couple, but it's made obvious that Derek is utterly out of step with everybody else he meets. And his near-suicide reveals him to be acting from a place of pain. More interestingly still, this is a crafty updating of genuine elements from the traditional Scandinavian Poetic Edda – when our Thor turns up at the wedding, wearing a dress as part of a deal to get back his hammer from the couple who confiscated it, it's inspired by a story in which Thor has to cross-dress as a bride in order to get Mjölnir back from the king of the Jötnar (although in the legends it's Loki who goes disguised as his maid, not Odin).

Social commentary, medieval mythology and drunken karaoke in one 43-minute episode? That's why we continue to love *The Almighty Johnsons*. **Dave Bradley**

FACT ATTACK!

- The show has nabbed Finalist Awards from the New York Festival twice, for Best Writing (2012) and Best Drama (2013).
- Norsewood, the ancestral hometown of the show's eponymous family, is a real place on New Zealand's North Island. It was founded by Scandinavian settlers in 1872.
- Episode four has a line about them all being "some sort of fellowship off on a quest", a dig at Dean O'Gorman (who plays Anders Johnson), who's better known as Fili in *The Hobbit* movies.
- You can follow young Odin on Twitter: he's @emmettskilton

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Conscience Fiction

CONTINUUM: The most politically relevant SF show since *BSG*?

***CONTINUUM* IS EVERYTHING** you could want from a sci-fi show. It's got people from the future in magical tech suits kicking the bejesus out of each other, edge-of-the-seat action, an expanding ensemble of characters, ingenious gadgets, and so many intriguing knots in its space-time continuum that you really have to pay attention to keep track of what's going on.

Yet there's something more going on in *Continuum*, a willingness to sneak in some on-the-nail commentary on the real world. The subject matter may be different (it's as much about economics as national security), but there are echoes of the equally socially aware *Battlestar Galactica*. There must be something in the Vancouver air...

It's become a cliché to say that you're using science fiction to point a mirror at modern society, but how often do we actually see that play out on telly? *Continuum* is blatant about its political agenda, and the show's themes are like a tick list of a *Guardian* reader's concerns. This season we've encountered the dangers of the surveillance society, a privately funded police force, questions about the use of torture and whether the ends justify the means, and the morality of whether it's acceptable to punish someone for a crime they haven't yet committed – all in a world where nominal villains Liber8 are fighting against big corporations who it's very easy to see as the bad guys.

"Stop! Or I'll fire my torch at you."

Take out the politics and *Continuum* would still be up there with the best shows on TV – with the introduction of Escher, freelancers, Theseus, and more revelations about Alec, season two has built on the foundations of the first year – but as with *BSG*, real-world concerns provide an extra weapon for the arsenal. *Continuum* never forgets that its primary function is to entertain, but there's nothing wrong with reminding us that sci-fi is a dish best served with brains. **Richard Edwards**

FACT ATTACK!

- Rachel Nichols (Kiera) started modelling to pay for an MBA. She was studying economics at the prestigious Columbia University at the time.
- On top of the political agenda, *Continuum* shares a couple of other cast with the *BSG* universe – Tahmoh Penikett (Jim Martin) played Helo, while Magda Apanowicz (Emily) was Lacy in *Caprica*.
- A third season of Continuum has been greenlit. It will air in 2014.

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She's just so much more interesting on her own.

BROADCAST AIRS ON MTV IN THE US

Breaking Hearts

TEEN WOLF: Trashing the romance and making way for the raucous

THERE'S A PROBLEM WITH teen dramas. No matter how good the action or how clever the dialogue, there's always some gut-wrenching, forlorn looks, teamed with whispers of forever love that make me want to gouge my eyes out and scrub them with the bitterness of reality.

Don't worry; I'm actually in a very happy relationship at the moment, so this won't be filled with the sad and sorry ramblings of a woman scorned. And *Teen Wolf* season three has actually proved to be its best yet. There's been more action, more blood and more badass weaponry. It's seen showrunner Jeff Davis concentrate on writing a battle of the egos and allowed director Russell Mulcahy to flex his impressive fight choreographing muscles; it's allowed the make-up department to produce blood-poppin' eyes and gashed torsos; and it's allowed more screen time for the singletons among Beacon Hills.

I breathed a huge sigh of relief once Scott and Allison broke ties – their make out sessions were beyond embarrassing. When they were together, all Allison ever spoke about was Scott; all Allison ever worried about was Scott; all Allison ever thought about was Scott. Breaking them up has allowed her to become one of the strongest female characters on the show – turning up at the abandoned mall to save her friends with her archery skills, figuring out the location of Boyd and Erica from the bruise left on her arm, stitching up Scott in a gas station bathroom (okay, Scott seems to be involved in most of these but at least there's no prolonged steamy smooching at the end of it).

You could say the same for Lydia. When not chasing boys or pining over assholes, she's one of the most intriguing characters in the entire series, often proving more important than first suspected. Instead of cheese-infested couples, *Teen Wolf* should focus on the subtle relationships between its characters. Just look at Boyd and Erica: while they're not romantically tied their friendship is far more interesting and believable – Boyd's flashback of her death was genuinely heartbreaking.

I get that teenagers love a bit of love, but the show shouldn't be afraid to leave the clichés behind. Honing in on the action and focusing on snappy dialogue will allow *Teen Wolf* to become more than just a guilty adolescent pleasure. However, with the hinted blossoming of Isaac and Allison, I can't help but feel it's doomed to fall back into its old ways. **Sammy Maine**

FACT ATTACK!

- Crystal Reed (Allison) and Daniel Sharman (Isaac) are actually dating in real life. It seems the on-screen chemistry has broken through the fourth wall.
- Although Beacon Hills is a fictional town, the first episode of season three saw posters for missing persons with the area code 925, which is a real area code in Northern California.
- Recognise Haley Webb (English teacher Jennifer Blake)? She starred as Janet in 2009's *The Final Destination*.

YOU HAVE BEEN WATCHING... CONTINUUM

SFX's Facebook and Twitter followers share their thoughts on season two

- **Paul Brewer:** A slow build, but what kept me interested is Liber8 fighting for a righteous cause in the wrong way and Keira defending the status quo for essentially selfish reasons. A brilliant season two finale, which actually answered questions before setting new ones.
- **Andrew Gillman:** A frustrating season of great ideas and half explored stories; when it was good, though, it was brilliant.
- **Greg Fones:** A very good show which flirts with greatness but just needs that final push. It's on the cusp and season three could potentially be epic.
- **Kevin Hall:** Love Kiera's relationship with Carlos and Alec, and her high tech suit is still brilliant.
- **Ian Davenport:** Loved this season; it really developed the characters in unexpected ways, expanded the story and the vision of the future, and left things agonisingly final but with a small ray of hope!
- **Miriam McDonald:** Things have been feeling much more pressured this season as Liber8 step up their activities – there's also much more ambiguity about who's "good" and who's "bad". That said, I felt the first series had a much clearer storyline overall. Lots of new people and ideas were introduced this time, and as an overabundance of conspiracy ended up killing my enthusiasm for *The X-Files*, I really hope that the makers of *Continuum* don't end up tying themselves in plot-knots.
- **Keith Lawrence:** I really enjoyed the first season and most of the second, but got confused towards the end about who wants what – I'm only sure that Keira wants to go home! Roll on season three.

GORE-SOME!

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★★★★★ Superb ★★★★ Good ★★★ Average ★★ Poor ★ Terrible

100

Byzantium

Arterton in arthouse artery attack

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Riddick

No Vin ordinaire: the shiny-eyed killer returns in this Diesel-powered actioner.

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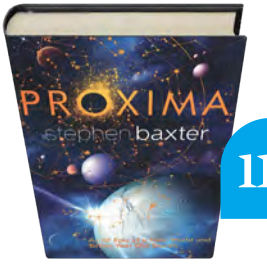
Arrow Season One

Stephen Amell is DC's Emerald Archer in The CW's latest superhero show. But does the first run hit the target?



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Proxima

A colony mission heads to the Alpha Centauri star system in Stephen Baxter's Arthur C Clarkeian new novel.

Riddick

Pitch Back

★★★½☆

Release Date: OUT NOW!
15 | 118 minutes
Distributor: Entertainment One
Director: David Twohy
Cast: Vin Diesel, Katee Sackhoff, Jordi Mollà, Matt Nable, Dave Bautista, Karl Urban, Bokeem Woodbine

By any accepted law of economics, *Riddick* is a movie that should not exist. For all its world-building ambition, *The Chronicles Of Riddick* was a commercial and critical lemon, the kind of movie that's more lethal to a franchise than a swarm of bioraptors during an eclipse.

But both off and on the screen Vin Diesel's shiny-eyed killer is a survivor. *Riddick*'s lengthy opening sequence finds the amoral antihero licking his wounds after being left for dead on an unnamed planet, isolating the action from the sprawling lore that bogged down the last film.

Riddick is at its most audacious in that opening half hour, pitting one wounded animal against a planet full of predators, including lumbering dog-like Jackals and deadly Mud Demons – *Riddick*'s equivalent of *Pitch Black*'s nocturnal nasties. It's a back-to-basics approach which even succeeds in adding an element of warmth to the series. Riddick raising a stray Jackal from pup to Furyan's best friend is probably the last thing you'd expect from a character with more notches on his knives than Freddy Krueger, but it establishes the film as tonally a refreshingly different beast from its forebears.

With violence and nudity, it signifies a welcome return to the series' B-movie roots

Structurally, that's not quite the case. After nursing himself back to health Riddick lures two groups of bounty hunters down to the surface with an eye to ghosting the crews and making off with a vessel. Things don't quite go to plan for the goggled baldy, but the bounty hunters soon discover it ain't Riddick they gotta worry about...

The story shares more than a few similarities to *Pitch Black*, so much so that at times it veers worryingly close to remake territory: the single-planet setting, the army of lethal creatures due to swarm the surface on a meteorological deadline, an escape plan which requires power nodes to be carried from point A to point B... *Riddick* has no intention of abandoning its established chronology, however. An all-too-brief flashback bridges the gap between *The Chronicles Of Riddick* and its modestly-monickered sequel, and sees the return of Karl Urban's Vaako, while a crucial character provides connective tissue to one of the first film's more important relationships.

Without the budget to continue the *Chronicles* as planned (*Riddick* was made for less than half its predecessor's $100 million) writer/director David Twohy reduces his supporting cast of thousands down to just 11 mercs – all after Riddick's noggin, but for very different reasons. The first six, led by sociopathic Spaniard Santana (Jordi Mollà) count heavy weapons expert Diaz (Dave Bautista) and god-bothering Luna (*Warehouse 13*'s Nolan Funk) among their ranks. They're the amateur-hour yin to the professional yang of Boss Johns's five-man crew, which includes sniper Dahl (Katee Sackhoff) and tracker Lockspur (Raoul Trujillo). Upon their arrival Riddick returns to the shadows and is seldom seen as the mercs drop like flies while searching for a bounty they have no hope of catching. Keeping Riddick largely out of sight for a significant chunk of the action proves a bold storytelling switcheroo and, coupled with the methodical pacing of the film's first half, helps distinguish *Riddick* from the city-levelling norm of this summer's blockbuster offerings.

There's little horror, and the fireworks don't come thick and fast until the final act, but what Twohy's script has in abundance is a surprisingly satisfying line in humour. Santana is the standout – a cocksure incompetent who gets his arse handed to him by the perma-furious Dahl (Sackhoff playing Starbuck turned up to 11) on a regular basis. Dave Bautista also demonstrates the kind of comedic chops that should serve him in good stead as Drax the Destroyer in *Guardians Of The Galaxy*. Sadly most of the mercs don't fare quite so well, with all but four little more than Mud Demon/Riddick fodder.

Naturally, the star of the show is Vin Diesel. As Riddick he has the commanding physicality, ice-cool charisma and playful swagger of a genuine genre icon. When we first see Riddick, his time as

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"I must do something about my sweat."

Necromonger Lord Marshall has left him "civilised". There's a sense he's a more vulnerable beast than before, and a more outright heroic one, who trades on his reputation as the galaxy's ultimate badass as much as any other tool in his makeshift arsenal. Despite this, he still gets a handful of fantastically muscular fights and at least two wincingly brutal kills that stand out among his best moments to date. *Riddick* is no longer hamstrung by a mass-market rating, either. Twohy pushes the top end of 15 with comically absurd levels of violence, gratuitous nudity and a line in crude dialogue which signify a welcome return to the series' B-movie roots.

With the entire film having been shot on a soundstage in Canada there's a lot of CG, and though the environmental work is flawless, some of the composite shots and CG creatures fall foul of the film's modest budget/big ambition ratio. The soundtrack also takes a disappointing turn for the dubstep in the final moments, which is particularly egregious given that Riddick has one of the most hummable character themes in recent memory.

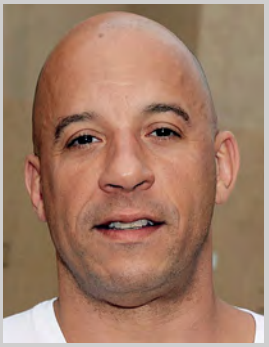
Should *Riddick* do the kind of business that saw *Pitch Black* attain cult classic status, Diesel and Twohy have already outlined plans for two big-budget sequels which will see Riddick journey to the Underverse and Furya. While this third chapter borrows a little too liberally from *Pitch Black* it's a step up from *Chronicles*, and the big screen is all the better for having Riddick back on it. Don't stay in the shadows so long next time, fella. **Jordan Farley**

? Twohy cut several scenes from the flashback sequence, which he hopes to reinstate for a Director's Cut DVD.

MINDPROBE

Vin Diesel

Star of *Riddick*



What kind of pressure did you feel walking on to the set as the star of this film?
The pressure was indescribable, because I'd leveraged so much to do this movie. But the second I walk onto the set and I know that there's a camera and I know that there's a David Twohy behind that camera, there is zero pressure. There's just me jumping into a pool called Riddick. It's the most free I am. It's like taking a drug called Riddick and living in that space.

How do you prepare to play a character like Riddick?
My process is kind of bizarre. I'll take three or four months and just go off into the woods. It's a meditated process that will allow for me to walk on set and be able to pull out that character instantaneously. It usually demands a very reclusive period before coming here. When I finally come on the set, I'm releasing that and I'm almost *breathing*, in a way, if that makes sense.

How important is the relationship between you and David Twohy?
When we were doing *The Chronicles Of Riddick*, there were other directors being presented that the studio wanted to go with. You could get a director to come in and deliver a polished movie that's in focus, but you would lose so much by not having somebody in that chair with a huge ego about the property and a huge investment and claim about the property. It was always me backing the David Twohy of it all. **Jordan Farley**

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RIPD

Dead Men In Black

★★☆☆☆

Release Date: 20 September
12A | 96 minutes
Distributor: Universal
Director: Robert Schwentke
Cast: Ryan Reynolds, Jeff Bridges, Mary-Louise Parker, Kevin Bacon, Robert Knepper

America: home of gun control.

Pity detective Nick Walker (Ryan Reynolds). He and partner Bobby (Kevin Bacon) are hiding gold from a drugs bust, but Nick wants to do the right thing. When Bobby double crosses him, Nick ends up dead, then is recruited for the Rest In Peace Department. To avoid eternal judgement, he'll have to round up "Deados", rotten spirits lingering in the land of the living.

Pity everyone involved with this film, too. Though perhaps "pity" isn't quite the word, considering the unadulterated cynicism. Here's the shake-and-make movie recipe: take the basic concept of *Men In Black*, replace the aliens with ghosts, change the villain's globe-threatening plan and boom!

It's not difficult to see why it launched to a whimper at the US box office: for all the crash-bang-wallop effects, *Red* director Robert Schwentke's latest lacks a spark, content to blithely tick boxes en route to the usual big finale.

The usually likeable Reynolds is reduced to bland heroism, poor wisecracks withering as they leave his mouth. Attempts to drum up buddy cop chemistry are equally unsuccessful; Jeff Bridges's gruff cowboy comes across as a character in a different film, a clumsy hybrid of *Tron: Legacy*'s Kevin Flynn and *True Grit*'s Rooster Cogburn.

We'll resist the temptation to make "dead on arrival" gags and simply point you to the original comic or the first *MIB* movie. Both are a better use of your time and money. **James White**

The Hangover star Zach Galifianakis was the original choice for Roy, but had to drop out due to scheduling issues.

How I Live Now

Love and war

★★★½☆

Release Date: 4 October
15 | 101 minutes
Distributor: Eone Entertainment
Director: Kevin MacDonald
Cast: Saoirse Ronan, George MacKay, Tom Holland, Harley Bird

Rambling can be dull.

The Hunger Games meets *Children Of Men* in *The Last King Of Scotland* director Kevin MacDonald's adap of Meg Rosoff's YA novel.

Saoirse Ronan plays stroppy American teen Daisy, shipped over to stay in the countryside idyll of her British cousins. Initially cold and dismissive, the healing power of nature and a burgeoning love affair with her oldest cousin Edmond (George MacKay) thaws Daisy... then suddenly World War III breaks out and everything goes to shit. The sun-kissed romance of the first half is shattered and replaced with a dirty, dystopian world of violence and terror.

Brave, taboo-breaking, but tonally jarring, *How I Live Now* feels honest and weighty compared to much YA fare, confronting what could be the realities of an unspecified war – military rule, evacuation, shortages of food and power – but it may struggle to find an audience. The first half's too soppy for adults, the second too harrowing for young teens – not only is there the uncomfortable set-up of first cousins having sex, but major characters (including children) are killed. There's none of the gloss of *Twilight*; indeed, one sequence, which has Daisy searching through a mass open grave, delivers a *Schindler's List*-esque gut punch.

Packed with integrity but not likely cash cow franchise potential, *How I Live Now* is a refreshing mishit more interested in challenging than indulging its audience. **Rosie Fletcher**

Ten-year-old Harley Bird, whose character Piper finds herself stranded with Daisy, is also the voice of Peppa Pig.

Insidious: Chapter 2

It still ain't the *house* that's haunted

★★★☆☆

Release Date: OUT NOW!
15 | 102 minutes
Distributor: Momentum
Director: James Wan
Cast: Patrick Wilson, Rose Byrne, Lin Shaye, Barbara Hershey

Room service had a few surprises.

The Lambert family might have thought they put their spooky problems behind them after the events of the first *Insidious*, but clearly none of them has watched a horror movie. Just as it proved the last time, spirit visitations continue to pester Patrick Wilson's Josh, wife Renai (Rose Byrne) and their clutch of moppets.

This time around, James Wan and co-writer Leigh Whannell dig deep into Josh's past, exploring the idea that all the weird links to the spirit world existed long before young Dalton (Ty Simpkins) was dragged into the nether region.

Unfortunately, the second dose isn't as original or as satisfying as the first, relying more heavily on loud noises and other horror standards. Some weird choices in the flashback scenes (such as having Lin Shaye's voice awkwardly dubbed over the actress playing her younger self) don't help. Still, Whannell and Angus Sampson are reliably entertaining as goofball paranormal investigators Specs and Tucker, and there are some decent emotional moments for Shaye to chew on (despite her character's apparent death in the first film). We also get a deeper look into the strange world of ghosts that exists beyond our own, even if we don't exactly learn much that's fresh.

This second chapter might not add much that's new to the mythology besides the young Josh connection, but it's scarily entertaining enough to stand alongside the first. **James White**

Wan did this because he wasn't happy with *Saw*'s sequels. "If anyone's going to fuck up my franchise, it might as well be me."

A Magnificent Haunting

The Italian *Being Human*. Sort of

★★★½☆

Release Date: 4 October
12A | 101 minutes
Distributor: Peccadillo Pictures
Director: Ferzan Özpetek
Cast: Elio Germano, Paola Minaccioni, Margherita Buy, Vittoria Puccini, Ambrogio Maestri

Without a tie, he wasn't coming in.

This sweet Italian comedy bears a passing resemblance to *Being Human*, if you excuse the fact there are no vampires, werewolves or, well, horror of any kind (barring one slightly spooky scene in which the hero walks into his lounge and the lights go out).

Pietro – Elio Germano, who at times looks a bit like Robert Downey Jr after a long diet – can't believe his luck when he rents a fantastic flat in Rome. It's not long before he realises it's haunted by a troop of actors who hid there during WWII. As Pietro copes with his new housemates, everyone around him thinks he's bonkers.

Why are the ghosts there? That's the thing that almost ruins the film, actually, because Pietro doesn't seem to care, expending no energy whatsoever to find out what happened to them in the past. It's infuriating seeing someone act so illogically – come on, if your house was haunted you'd at least want to know *why*!

Thankfully the film's gentle humour makes up for Pietro's gormlessness, as does Germano's performance: he's adorable, and has wonderful comic timing. There's also an unusual subplot featuring some kind of transvestite underground information network, and Pietro's effervescent cousin, Maria (Paola Minaccioni) is great fun. It's a shame the middle sags as you wait for Pietro to take charge, but otherwise this is a lovely little haunter. **Jayne Nelson**

Don't live near an arthouse cinema? Don't worry: *A Magnifcent Haunting* is out on DVD on 28 October.

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About Time

Time Travel, Actually

★★★☆☆

Release Date: OUT NOW!

12A | 123 minutes

Distributor: Universal Studios

Director: Richard Curtis

Cast: Domhnall Gleeson, Rachel McAdams, Bill Nighy, Lindsay Duncan, Lydia Wilson

The mourners' behaviour was appalling.

WHAT IS IT WITH RICHARD Curtis and the way he remakes the same film over and over again? If you've seen *Four Weddings* or *Notting Hill* you've already seen *About Time*, except that instead of the bumbling and adorable Hugh Grant falling in love with an American woman, we get the bumbling and adorable Domhnall Gleeson falling in love with an American woman.

The characters are all the same, too: posh, white, fond of saying "horrid" and "etc", representative of 0.5% of real British citizens and yet appealing to US audiences – along with the film's idealised London and beautiful Cornish scenery.

The twist here, however, is that Gleeson's ordinary Tim can time travel, so he uses his powers to reshape first dates, improve rubbish sexual conquests and even change a best man speech at a wedding. It's all hopelessly predictable, right down to the inevitable chin-wobbly plot twists, but somehow it works. Gleeson is marvellous, the script is laugh-out-loud funny, Rachel McAdams's Mary is delectable (if ridiculously perfect) and Bill Nighy is, well, Bill Nighy. For a film that on the surface appears to be about a guy trying to get a girl to fall in love with him, it's really a story about fathers and sons, which supplies surprising – albeit contrived – emotional depth.

If you've been infuriated by Curtis's soppiness before, it's probably best to stay away. If *Notting Hill* warmed your cockles, though, this is miles better. **Jayne Nelson**

? Curtis says this will probably be the last film he directs."Maybe it's time that I try and walk in the park a bit."

The Wicker Man: The Final Cut

The last straw?

★★★★★

Release Date: 27 September

1973 | 92 minutes

Distributor: StudioCanal

Director: Robin Hardy

Cast: Edward Woodward, Christopher Lee, Britt Ekland, Ingrid Pitt, Diane Cilento

Better than a Casio alarm clock radio?

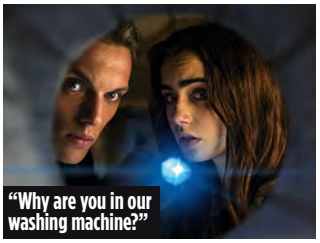
IF YOU'VE NEVER heard of *The Wicker Man*, our advice is a) see it and b) *don't* google it – it's one of the most spoilerable classics ever.

On a mysterious Hebridean island, modern pagans sing and, er, frolic, led by the urbane Lord Summerisle (Christopher Lee). He runs rings round a puritan policeman (Edward Woodward), who's searching for a missing child. Even today, the film is *different*, from its jocular-sinister first two-thirds to its unforgettable payoff.

Fans note: this is not a "new" *Wicker Man* featuring lost footage disinterred from the M3. It's longer than the most widely seen version, but shorter than the "Director's Cut" previously released on DVD. In fact, it's what's sometimes called the "Middle version", previously released in US cinemas in 1979. So you get Lee reciting poetry while regarding copulating snails – though at the risk of heresy, this scene feels clumsily placed as the character's introduction. The seductive Britt Ekland's naked wall-slapping dance is pushed back to later. The Scottish mainland prologue is trimmed to a brief scene in a church, and some other brief moments which feature in the Director's Cut are omitted.

Most importantly, this film print looks great – though there are faults. Some early shots of the village feel inconsistent, and the Lee/snails and church scenes are of visibly low quality. Overall, though, Summerisle looks splendid. **Andrew Osmond**

? If you want a detailed breakdown of the different cuts of the film, we recommend this website: http://www.steve-p.org/wm/



"Why are you in our washing machine?"

The Mortal Instruments: City Of Bones

Angelic upstarts

★★★☆☆

Release Date: OUT NOW!

12A | 130 minutes

Distributor: Entertainment One

Director: Harald Zwart

Cast: Lily Collins, Jamie Campbell Bower, Robert Sheehan, Lena Headey, Jared Harris

VAMPIRES, WEREWOLVES, and doomed teen romance... It'd be easy to write off *The Mortal Instruments: City Of Bones* as just another *Twilight* clone, but it's actually got more in common with the *Harry Potter* franchise. When its heroine, Clary (Lily "daughter of Phil" Collins), finds out she has angelic powers and is whisked off to an invisible castle to learn how to use them, it's hard not to be reminded of Master Potter arriving at Hogwarts for the first time.

The difference is that Harry was 11 and Clary is nearly 20, which means things can get a little darker and a lot sexier. So yes, there's romance – a mess of unrequited love that involves at least four of the main characters. There's also an epic quest, an evil wizard bent on cleansing the magical bloodline, and dozens of monsters. None of it's very original: Cassandra Clare, author of the Young Adult novel the film's based on, started out as a fanfic writer, and her fandom roots are pretty obvious. Despite the snarky, self-aware dialogue, there are just too many moments that are recognisable from other movies.

Still, at least the film is never dull. The story moves quickly, the cast is endearing, and there's a real sense of grandeur. Grown-ups might've seen these tropes too many times to be impressed, but for teenage girls, it's a full-on Tumblrgasm in the making. **Sarah Dobbs**

? When Cassandra Clare visited the set, she cried over the props – luckily, because she thought they were perfect.

COMING SOON

25 OCTOBER

ENDER'S GAME *Hugo*'s Asa Butterfield plays Ender, a boy being trained to fight the insectoid "Formics", in this adaptation of Orson Scott Card's 1985 novel.

CLOUDY WITH A CHANCE OF MEATBALLS 2 A food-making satellite creates mutant food beasts like tacodiles and shrimpanzees in this animated sequel.

30 OCTOBER

THOR: THE DARK WORLD Chris Hemsworth's Asgardian prince faces off against Christopher Eccleston's dark elf Malekith the Accursed.

31 OCTOBER

THE HAUNTING IN CONNECTICUT 2: GHOSTS OF GEORGIA A young girl who can see ghosts is menaced by the spirit of an evil taxidermist.

1 NOVEMBER

NOSFERATU THE VAMPYRE A reissue of Werner Herzog's 1979 remake of silent classic *Nosferatu*. Klaus Kinski plays Dracula.

8 NOVEMBER

GRAVITY Sandra Bullock and George Clooney's astronauts must struggle to survive after their space shuttle is wrecked by debris.

George Clooney defies *Gravity* this November.

21 NOVEMBER

THE HUNGER GAMES: CATCHING FIRE Jennifer Lawrence's Katniss competes against the winners of the previous 24 Hunger Games in the latest Suzanne Collins adap.

29 NOVEMBER

CARRIE Hit-Girl Chloë Grace Moretz stars in the new movie of the Stephen King novel about a girl with telekinetic powers.

6 DECEMBER

FROZEN A young royal goes on a quest to end an eternal winter in this Disney animation, based on Hans Christian Andersen fairytale "The Snow Queen".

13 DECEMBER

THE HOBBIT: THE DESOLATION OF SMAUG Bilbo Baggins and co continue their journey in the second in the series.

Byzantium

Brothel creepers

★★★★☆ EXTRAS ★★★☆☆

Release Date: 23 September
2013 | 15 | 118 minutes | £17.99 (DVD)/£22.99 (Blu-ray)
Distributor: StudioCanal
Director: Neil Jordan
Cast: Gemma Arterton, Saoirse Ronan, Sam Riley, Caleb Landry Jones, Daniel Mays, Jonny Lee Miller

It's directed by Neil Jordan, it's about vampires and one of them is even interviewed at one point. *Byzantium*, however, is no stealth sequel to *Interview With The Vampire*. Even when there *are* flashbacks to the 19th century, the shirts are conspicuously non-frilly.

No, *Byzantium* more than justifies its existence on its own terms. Less because of any genre-quaking new twists on the vampires it might have to peddle (and it has a few, including pointy thumbnails instead of fangs) but more because it takes a powerful central relationship that hasn't been explored in the genre before, and runs with it. Let's just say it's *important* that the two lead vampires are female, but this is not some feminist reinvention of the genre.

All of which makes it perfect grist for Jordan, whose CV is full of dark fantasy and films with memorable female roles (*The Company Of Wolves*, *Mona Lisa*, *In Dreams*). Adapted for the screen from her own play by *Tamara Drewe* scripter Moira Buffini, it expands the original material, adding great wodges of vampire lore and visceral horror, but never lets that overwhelm the central conceit. Set in the present day, this is the story of two immortal, on-the-run vampires, who – despite looking like there's only a few years between them – are a mother and daughter, both around 200 years old. Their relationship is fractious, held together by a blood bond (in both senses of the phrase) that means they're in a permanent state of mother/teenage daughter conflict, though in an *Absolutely Fabulous*-style twist it's the daughter, Eleanor (Saoirse Ronan) who's the sensitive, introverted, artistic one, while mum, Clara (Gemma Arterton), is out earning their keep by providing men with what men want most. Eleanor will only feed from those near to death who request release; Clara seems to think that men who pay for sex are fair game as blood donors too.

Byzantium is a solid, stylish and impeccably acted horror film, full of visual flourishes

The relationship, is, of course, a lot more complex than that, something explored in a series of stylish flashbacks to the origins of the two lasses' vampiric lives during the Napoleonic Wars. The flashbacks go into hyperdrive when the pair have to make a hasty retreat from the city after being discovered by the mysterious brotherhood (emphasis on brother). Winding up in the kind of seaside town from Morrissey's "Everyday Is Like Sunday", Clara soon sets up a brothel in a disused hotel called Byzantium. Her motives appear to be as much to do with helping the homeless women of the town as sourcing food. Not that Eleanor approves; she's off doing the mopey teenager bit, wowing the blue-rinse brigade with flawless piano recitals (in a scene that's breathtakingly beautiful in its simplicity) and finding herself an emo boyfriend with leukaemia, lanky Frank (Caleb Landry Jones). Eleanor recognises the town; they've returned to the place where Clara was first forced into prostitution two centuries before by the sneering Captain Ruthven (Jonny Lee Miller). It's his betrayal of a dying fellow officer that ultimately leads to Clara becoming a creature – as well as a lady – of the night. To make matters worse, she then creates the abomination that is Eleanor.

It could all be a wonderfully lurid, Hammer-esque horror circus. But Jordan and Buffini take an altogether more sober approach. *Byzantium*'s modern-day scenes alternate between the urban listlessness of *Let The Right One In* and the small town seediness of *The Crying Game*. Even the flashbacks keep the bodice-ripping to a minimum, opting instead for a more washed-out, hard-edged, though equally fanciful dip into history. That's not to say the film doesn't have some heartstoppingly beautiful images; it does. Jordan shoots the seaside town with a loving, lingering lens, and there's a cascade of blood (in which Arterton bathes) that looks simply gorgeous.

Arterton is magnificent as Clara, the tart with a heart (just not a beating one) and Ronan is perfect at the judgemental stares and shocking lapses into vampire creepiness.

She soon regretted taking the lift at the ketchup factory.

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Jones's Frank may look like Johnny Depp's take on a drunken Pinocchio, but the performance is so bizarre that he seems a perfect match for Eleanor.

Byzantium is a solid, stylish, impeccably acted horror film, full of visual flourishes, that evokes favourable comparison with such critically-lauded, performance-led vampire classics as *Daughters Of Darkness* and *Martin*. If it never quite attains the same level of notoriety it could be that it simply isn't scary enough. Creepy, yes. Tense, sure. But it's awfully polite and stiff upper-lipped when it comes to the gore. Eleanor and Clara kill (a lot), but they never really let rip. In a film that's so delightfully scuzzy and hard-nosed in other ways, the horror elements feel oddly tentative. The film also suffers from a couple of rather obvious and far-too-neat pay-offs at the climax, which make you wonder if somebody suddenly mentioned, "Sequel potential?"

Don't let that put you off, though. *Byzantium* is a connoisseur's vampire film; a vintage red.

Extras: Short interviews with stars Gemma Arterton (four minutes), Saoirse Ronan (four minutes), Sam Riley (six minutes), director Neil Jordan (four minutes) and producer Stephen Woolley (eleven minutes). It may seem a bit odd to devote most screen time to the producer, but Woolley's full of great anecdotes... Some of which get a second airing in the rough-and-ready 18-minute clip of a panel filmed at FrightFest in Glasgow, featuring Arterton, Woolley, Ronan and Jordan. Despite the fact it looks and sounds like it's been recorded by a member of the audience on an iPhone, it's great fun and well worth a watch. There's also a trailer. Which is nice. **Dave Golder**

? Before budget cuts dictated otherwise, *Byzantium*'s vampires were to have been created by a giant snake dropped from a bird.

Femmes With Fangs

Three of Eleanor and Clara's infamous predecessors

Elizabeth Báthory

This 16th century Hungarian Countess is said to have tortured and killed anywhere from 30 to 650 young women – the popular myth has it that she bathed in their blood. Two 1971 films featured Báthory: Ingrid Pitt played her in Hammer's *Countess Dracula*, while *Daughters Of Darkness* had Delphine Seyrig as an elegant lesbian in present-day Belgium.

Mircalla Karnstein

Sheridan Le Fanu's 1872 gothic novella *Carmilla* tells the story of 18-year-old Laura, who falls under the spell of a beautiful young woman who is actually a 16th century Countess. The story has inspired numerous films, most notably Hammer's 1970 effort *The Vampire Lovers*, Roger Vadim's *Blood And Roses* (1960) and Spain's *The Blood-Spattered Bride* (1972).

Vampirella

Surely comics' most famous female vamp, this scantily-clad superheroine made her first appearance in 1969. Originally presented as an alien from the planet Drakulon, a later revamp revealed that she was actually the daughter of Adam's disobedient first wife, Lilith. Sadly, a Hammer movie adap never got off the ground. **Ian Berriman**

Arrow Season One

Bowman Begins

★★★★☆ EXTRAS ★★★★☆

Release Date: 23 September

2012-2013 | 15 | 932 minutes | £29.99 (DVD)/£39.99 (Blu-ray)

Distributor: Warner Home Video

Creators: Greg Berlanti, Marc Guggenheim, Andrew Kreisberg

Cast: Stephen Amell, David Ramsey, Katie Cassidy, Willa Holland, Manu Bennett, Emily Bett Rickards, Paul Blackthorne

In a post-Nolan landscape it was inevitable some of DC's big-hitters would be subjected to similar *Dark Knight*-inspired interpretations. The team behind The CW's latest superhero series seem to have taken the inspiration a little too closely to heart though, not just remoulding Oliver Queen and his vigilante alter ego in Batman's image, but lifting lines, scenes, key plot points and a *raison d'être* wholesale from *Batman Begins*.

To say much more would risk spoiling an otherwise accomplished first season. Stephen Amell stars as billionaire playboy Queen, the future Emerald Archer, who returns to his beloved Starling City after five years on a perilous island. The show splits its time between contemporary crim-capers and survival-powered island flashbacks, and does a decent job in balancing both.

It gets off to a shaky start, with script after script failing to hit the mark, but finds its feet for a far more engaging second half, and tops it all with a bravura final hour which boasts big-screen scale alongside an unwavering small-screen focus on emotional character beats.

The show has a critical problem, though. Amell has the physicality to make the Hood a believable badass, but proves a stony-faced blank at the heart of the series, with the range of an Easter Island statue and all the likeability of sweaty gym socks. The same goes for key supporting characters Tommy and Laurel, whose insipid soap opera shenanigans are frequently the low point of any episode. The villains generally disappoint too, ranging from serviceable (China White) to dire (Count Vertigo).

Maid Marian packed heat.

Fortunately for Amell, he's surrounded by a supremely entertaining supporting cast – particularly BFF Diggle (David Ramsey), island mentor Slade Wilson (Manu Bennett) and tech whizz Felicitiy Smoak (Emily Bett Rickards), while the consistently incredible fight choreography means that even in the duff episodes there's something to enjoy.

It's a morally challenging show. Queen is a cold-blooded killer, his brand of heroics unsuitable for younger viewers. And the "grounded" approach can sometimes sit at odds with the numerous call-backs to the comics. But by the end it proves a winning formula. Let's hope season two hits the bull's-eye.

Extras: 25 minutes of (mostly naff) deleted scenes, a bitty 28-minute Making Of, a two-minute gag reel and a 30-minute panel moderated by DC's Geoff Johns. **Jordan Farley**

? The Flash will appear in three episodes of season two, with the last episode serving as a pilot for a new Flash series.

Revolution Season One

Low on juice

★★★☆☆ EXTRAS ★★★☆☆

Release Date: 30 September

2012-2013 | 15 | 823 minutes | £29.99 (DVD)/£39.99 (Blu-ray)

Distributor: Warner Bros Home Video

Creator: Eric Kripke

Cast: Billy Burke, Tracy Spiridakos, Daniella Alonso, Giancarlo Esposito, David Lyons, Elizabeth Mitchell, Zak Orth, JD Pardo

Supernatural creator Eric Kripke teams up with JJ Abrams, and the results are... a bit underwhelming. Turns out a dream creative team, a decent premise and impressive production values aren't always enough to make your show great.

Revolution kicks off 15 years after a global power cut has rendered iPhones (and every other electrical device on the planet) redundant, turning the US into an overgrown, authoritarian land ruled by scary new factions. Except, this being a primetime network show, things never seem all that bad – the danger level is generally pretty low, lines between good and evil are clearly defined, and everyone seems to have access to a decent hairdresser. *The Road* this ain't.

Yet the first half of the season is pretty enjoyable, as feisty 20-something Charlie Matheson enlists her ex-marine uncle to rescue her brother from the dodgy dictatorship of the Monroe Republic. The world building's solid, the swordfighting's fun, and the flashbacks provide just the right dripfeed of backstory. But as soon as the hunt for little bro is over, the show loses all forward momentum and turns into an extended walk in the countryside – be thankful for Giancarlo Esposito (*Breaking Bad*'s Gus Fring), who provides a gloriously OTT turn as soldier and self-preservation expert Tom Neville.

"Um, shouldn't we be on the show up there?"

Extras: A solid package featuring two minutes of deleted scenes (some mythology-expanding), a pointless gag reel, two decent featurettes that go deeper than the usual fluff, and five brief flashback webisodes that show how Neville was originally dispatched to find Charlie's dad. The Blu-ray (rated) adds a cast/crew panel filmed at annual telly shindig PaleyFest. **Richard Edwards**

Drinking Game
Take a shot when...

- Someone exposes a Monroe Republic wrist tattoo.
- Tom Neville puts on or removes his stylish armless sunglasses.
- There's a flashback to before the blackout.
- A character draws a sword.
- An electrical appliance suddenly bursts into life.
- Tom Neville switches sides.
- The nanites do something unexpected and magic!
- General Monroe has one of his subordinates cruelly executed.
- Jason looks like he's concentrating very, very hard on breathing. Or walking. Or talking.

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Doctor Who: Scream Of The Shalka

Granted temporary access

★★★☆☆ EXTRAS ★★★★☆

Release Date: OUT NOW!

2003 | PG | 80 minutes | £19.99 (DVD)

Distributor: BBC Worldwide

Director: Wilson Milam

Cast: Richard E Grant, Sophie Okonedo, Craig Kelly, Derek Jacobi, Diana Quick, Jim Norton

Can it really be ten years since the BBC announced they were finally making some new *Doctor Who*? How excited we were to hear that a respected actor would be the Ninth Doctor! Who'd have thought they'd snag... Richard E Grant?!

Two months later a more momentous press release followed, nudging the BBC website's Flash animation into the shadow realm of questionable canonicity. Running for six 15-minute episodes, scripted by Paul Cornell, this fortieth anniversary webcast saw shrieking underground-dwelling worms terrorising Lancashire as part of a plan to transform Earth's atmosphere.

A decade on it's a curio, principally of interest to see how another writer "relaunched" the series. There are some remarkable similarities: the Doctor is a damaged figure (the unspoken backstory is that Gallifrey's gone); Derek Jacobi plays the Master (sort of – in a bonkers move, he's now a kind of waspish K-9 substitute, his consciousness stuck in an android body); our hero has a mobile phone. And the final scene forces the incoming companion to choose between flying off with the Doctor or staying on Earth, stuck in a mediocre relationship. No wonder Cornell describes the series as John the Baptist to new *Who*'s Christ.

The big difference is the likeability of the Doctor. Russell T Davies damned Grant's performance as "lazy", which is maybe a little harsh – the character warms up in the rompier last two instalments, which give him a chance to kick out the jams. But it's certainly true that initially the Time Lord is a cold, snobbish crosspatch. The fact that animators Cosgrove Hall make him look like a vampire (or a hungover Nick Cave) doesn't help.

Extras: The commentary is well worth a listen; its revolving cast features Cornell, the director and producer James Goss. Goss also presents "Carry On Screaming" (27 minutes), an excellent Making Of. "The Screaming Sessions" collects bland contemporary interviews, while "Interweb Of Fear" is a neat potted history of *Who*'s official online presence. Text commentary, the soundtrack and a gallery complete a solid selection. **Ian Berriman**

? Horror novelist Simon Clark was commissioned to write a second six-parter, "Blood Of The Robots", before the axe fell.

Little Shop Of Horrors

SFX RECOMMENDS

The most alternative ending ever!

★★★★★ EXTRAS ★★★☆☆

Release Date: OUT NOW!

1986 | 12 | 94 minutes (theatrical)/103 minutes (Director's Cut) | £17.99 (Blu-ray)

Distributor: Warner Home Video

Director: Frank Oz

Cast: Rick Moranis, Ellen Greene, Vincent Gardenia, Steve Martin

One of cinema's greatest monsters is a giant, bloodsucking plant. That sings. And is called Audrey II. But the brilliant, Jim Henson Workshop-created vampire shrub is only one reason to love this quirky black comedy musical. Great songs, exquisite production design, two loveable geek leads, some Gilliam-esque gadgets and Steve Martin as a sadistic dentist all make *Little Shop Of Horrors* a film with something for everyone. Except, maybe, kaiju fans. Oh, hang on...

Hey, even they're catered for now, thanks to a Director's Cut that reinstates the original ending, which sees cuttings from Audrey II growing to ginormous size and wrecking New York, Godzilla-style. Visually, it's awesome, with gorgeous model work that looks stunning on Blu-ray.

This ending was dumped because it also involved the two lead characters being killed off, which preview audiences hated. They had a point; the tonal shift is very jarring. But the big FX sequence is so technically impressive (and features some great sight gags) that it's great to finally get to see it.

Extras: Just a previously-released director's commentaries on both the theatrical version and the alternate ending (recorded for a withdrawn release from a decade ago); both often sound out of date. There's also a new featurette about the alternate ending, a 1986 TV doc, and a very odd gag reel. **Dave Golder**

? At its most complex, vampiric topiary Audrey II was being operated by nearly 60 different people.

The Fly

Fifties classic still creates a buzz

★★★★☆ EXTRAS ★★★½☆

Release Date: OUT NOW!

1958 | PG | 94 minutes | £12.99 (Blu-ray)

Distributor: Twentieth Century Fox Home Entertainment

Director: Kurt Neumann

Cast: Vincent Price, David Hedison, Patricia Owens

Somewhat overshadowed now by David Cronenberg's 1986 remake, the original matter-transporter-accident shocker still has plenty going for it.

The way it's structured may take modern viewers by surprise, and arguably knowledge of the various reveals diminishes the suspense. We first meet Helene Delambre (Patricia Owens), wife of scientist Andre (David Hedison), phoning up his brother Francois (Vincent Price) to tell him she's just killed her hubby. By crushing his head in a hydraulic press. Twice. Why would she have done a thing like that?

The passing years may have blunted the bizarreness of the concept – imagine seeing this in 1958, unaware of its insectoid mutations – but stand-out sequences still impress: the fly's multiple-image POV of a screaming Owens, Hedison's hooded figure sporting one non-human hand, and the chilling "Help me!" finale.

It may also surprise newcomers that Mr Fly doesn't actually *do much*, but as he lumbers around in the shadows, wearing a hood, you can't help but shiver at the imagined scaly horror hidden underneath.

Extras: A chatty, informative commentary pairs film historian David Del Valle with star David Hedison. A 1997 TV biography (44 minutes) includes some big stars and delightful clips. "Fly Trap: Catching A Classic" (11 minutes) is a solid but sadly short Making Of, which also covers the two sequels. **Russell Lewin**

? Actor Herbert Marshall (the investigating inspector) had an artificial right leg – he lost the original in World War I.

The Walking Dead Season Three

Jailhouse shocks

★★★★☆ EXTRAS ★★★½☆

Release Date: 30 September
2012–2013 | 18 | 662 minutes | £39.99 (DVD)/£44.99 (Blu-ray)
Distributor: Entertainment One
Creators: Robert Kirkman, Frank Darabont
Cast: Andrew Lincoln, Sarah Wayne Callies, Laurie Holden, Steven Yeun, Norman Reedus, David Morrissey

The Walking Dead's third season takes out lead characters with a relish equalled only by *Game Of Thrones*. That "nobody's safe" ethos is great for building and maintaining tension, but by the end there are so few of the original cast still breathing that it's difficult to know who to root for.

Even those who remain are forced to be everything but heroic. Rick Grimes is struggling with grief, doubts about his leadership, the realisation that his son, Carl, may well be turning into a sociopath and some troubling visions of the dead – a borderline supernatural element that doesn't quite fit with the gritty tone elsewhere. Painting morality in shades of grey is all well and good, but the Walker-ruled world can be so relentlessly bleak that watching becomes hard work. Be thankful, then, for the little ray of sunshine that comes from Glenn and Maggie's (mostly) blossoming romance.

Fortunately the show's conveyor belt of new Walker bait strikes gold, with the return of Daryl's brother Merle, and the arrivals of katana-wielding Michonne and David Morrissey's dictatorial Governor. The latter, the authoritarian ruler of the seemingly idyllic community of Woodbury, is the standout, a Southern gent who evolves into the most dangerous threat (human or zombie) the show has ever seen.

Egg: now hard-boiled.

The season as a whole is an improvement on the at-times-pedestrian second year, yet too many episodes still feel like they're treading water. When it's firing on all cylinders, it's easy to see why *The Walking Dead* is the biggest show ever aired on US cable TV, but there are times when the writers need a zombie-shaped kick up the arse.

Extras: Five episodes get commentary tracks, including the harrowing "Killer Within", where director Guy Ferland and IronE Singleton (T-Dog) somehow manage to find things to laugh about amidst the gloom. Six deleted scenes are diverting if not essential: standout moments include the unexpected appearance of a key character as a zombie, and a surprisingly existential conversation between Carl and Beth about what happens to your soul when you become a Walker. The package is rounded out by cast and crew interviews spread across featurettes focused on (among others) Carl, Michonne, the Governor, the prison setting and the painful process of killing off characters. **Richard Edwards**

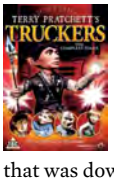
? A can of fictitious meat product Smeat (featured in *Waterworld*) is in a kitchen in episode one. See www.smeat.net for more.

Truckers

There's no race like Nomes

★★★★★ EXTRAS ☆☆☆☆☆

Release Date: 7 October
1992 | PG | 130 minutes | £19.99 (DVD)
Distributor: Freemantle Media International
Directors: Jackie Cockle, Chris Taylor, Francis Vose
Cast: Joe McGann, Michael Hordern, Brian Trueman, Debra Gillett, Edward Kelsey



Kids of the '80s were a lucky bunch. Children's TV of the era was some of the best ever, and a lot of that was down to Cosgrove Hall.

The Manchester-based outfit produced iconic series including *Danger Mouse* and *Count Duckula*, and also worked with authors including Roald Dahl (*The BFG*) and, in this case, Terry Pratchett.

Adapted from his non-Discworld fantasy about Nomes, four-inch high folk who live under the feet of humans, this 13-episode stopmotion production follows leader Masklin, lady Nome Grimma and friends as they attempt to find a new home.

Their travels take them from the wild to Arnold Bros (est 1905), a department store where Nomes have previously prospered but which is due for demolition. Following the advice of the Thing, a mysterious black cube which has been passed down through generations of Nomes, they set out into the big bad world.

Everyone was shocked when he said the C-word.

Bursting with trademark Pratchett wit, *Truckers* has held up extremely well. The digital restoration showcases the detail and craftmanship in the animation, and the story itself is inventive and surprisingly dark. It's not afraid to address big themes such as religion, misogyny, science and death, and never panders to its audience. Put together with intelligence and real skill, they really don't make 'em like this any more.

Extras: None. **Rob Power**

? Pratchett turned down numerous offers from the USA to adapt *Truckers*, as he felt a US production would "cutesy" it up.

Scary Stories

The dark of the matinee

★★★½☆ EXTRAS ★☆☆☆☆

Release Date: 23 September
1976/81/85 | PG | 182 minutes | £19.99 (DVD)
Distributor: BFI
Directors: James Hill, Andrew Bogle, John Krish
Cast: Alice Harvey, Andrew Keir, Garry Halliday

A peal of bells, a flutter of ancient pigeons and we're back in the benevolent clutches of Saturday matinee specialists the Children's Film Foundation.

This latest collection of freshly buffed prints from the BFI archive showcases their spookier side. 1976's *The Man From Nowhere* is an elegant slice of junior gothic, rooted in an E Nesbit realm of steam trains and soot-faced urchins. Exiled to her uncle's mansion of shadows and gaslight, orphan girl Alice is stalked by a sinister figure in black whose essential creepiness is sabotaged by the demented rave horn that blares whenever he pops up. A polite, fogeyish tale, it's ultimately more *Scooby-Doo* than MR James.

Haunters Of The Deep (1984) approaches the genuinely eerie:

Patented English "pensive look".

centred on a ghost-riddled Cornish tin mine, it's blessed with some gorgeous location work around the cliffs and ruins of the Penwith peninsula. More of a survival drama with supernatural embroidery, it's anchored by one-time Hammer Quatermass Andrew Keir as an old sea dog, haunted equally by memories and phantoms.

Stronger still is '85's *Out Of The Darkness* (a grainier, grittier-looking print), the tale of a village tormented by a dark chapter in its past. Its landscape of stone buildings and drab skies summons a sense of hauntological dread that's sadly missing from the film's rather more wholesome stablemates.

Extras: A booklet with notes and essays. **Nick Setchfield**

? *The Man From Nowhere* helmer James Hill was in line to direct Tom Baker's abortive '70s film *Doctor Who Meets Scratchman*.

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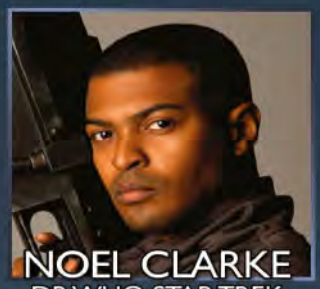

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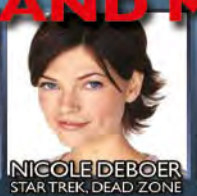

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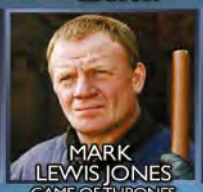
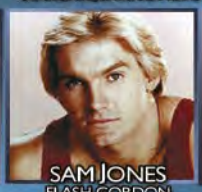


MARK LEWIS JONES
GAME OF THRONES



SAM JONES
FLASH GORDON

GEORGE GEORGIOU
GAME OF THRONES

SHAWN HERNANDEZ
WRESTLER

BRIAN BLESSED
FLASH GORDON, STAR WARS

WALTER JONES
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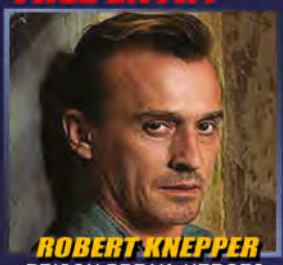

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SPECIES, SECRET CIRCLE

SHANE RANGI
LORD OF THE RINGS

KATY MANNING
DOCTOR WHO

PETER PURVES
DOCTOR WHO, BLUE PETER

BILLY DEE WILLIAMS
STAR WARS

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STAR WARS

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DOCTOR WHO

MARK STRICKSON
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BRIAN WHEELER
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Trevor's attempts at growing a beard were hit-and-miss.

Kev wasn't half a good scrum half.

BLU-RAY DEBUT

Squirm

The worms that turned

★★★☆☆ EXTRAS ★★★½☆

Release Date: 23 September

1976 | 15 | 93 minutes | £19.99 (double-play Blu-ray)

Distributor: Arrow Video

Director: Jeff Liebermann

Cast: Don Scardino, Patricia Pearcy, RA Dow, Jean Sullivan

NOWADAYS Georgia is the Undead State, what with *The Walking Dead* and *Zombieland* lensing there, but in 1975 it played host to the best movie ever made about killer worms.

The work of Jeff Liebermann, whose off-kilter horrors have such personality you can credibly call him an auteur, it sees a fallen electricity pylon zap the ground with thousands of volts. This makes the local worms mad – a problem, since they're the bitin' kind.

Squirm takes an age to get into top gear, though while we wait there's plenty of local colour. Lieberman's penchant for roping in residents means plenty of non-Hollywood faces, and his keen ear ensures the script is peppered with phrases like, "as happy as a bump on a log".

Once it gets going, there are memorable moments, as worms pour out of shower heads and – in the most impressive shot – burrow into a fella's face (the work of a 24-year-old Rick Baker).

Yet for all that *Squirm* seems a little subdued, never quite reaching the hoped-for levels of insanity. Though this was Liebermann's biggest commercial success, to see him at his best hunt down 1978's *Blue Sunshine*.

EXTRAS: Liebermann provides a highly professional solo commentary. A 2011 panel with the director and his star Don Scardino (24 minutes) goes over much of the same ground. A Kim Newman talking head (16 minutes) which covers all the bases, a trailer and a booklet complete the package. **Ian Berriman**

Squirm could have starred Kim Basinger (who auditioned), Martin Sheen (initially cast) and Sly Stallone (who wanted a role).

Citadel

Demonising hoodies

★★★☆☆ EXTRAS ★★☆☆☆

Release Date: 30 September

2013 | 15 | 81 minutes | £15.99 (DVD)

Distributor: Metrodome

Director: Ciarán Foy

Cast: Aneurin Barnard, James Cosmo, Jake Wilson, Wunmi Mosaku

WATCHING THIS dark urban fairytale, you rather expect events to eventually turn out to be all in the imagination of an unreliable narrator.

Tommy (Aneurin Barnard) certainly seems to qualify. Struggling with agoraphobia after his pregnant wife was attacked by syringe-wielding hoodies, he lives in terror that they'll come back to kidnap his infant daughter. Sure enough, they do, leaving him no option but to screw up all his courage and enter the condemned tower block that's their home to mount a heroic rescue.

It feels like this quest, with all its mythic echoes, should be read purely metaphorically – as Tommy "conquering his demons". But we're assured that these screeching, shuffling horrors are real. Specifically, they're deformed, *Hills Have Eyes*-style mutants – a peculiar move for a film mostly grounded in gritty reality. How could police and social services be unaware of their existence?

As the traumatised Tommy, Barnard excels at the saucer-eyed shivering required, and James Cosmo provides sturdy support as the potty-mouthed priest who leads him into battle. Writer/director Ciarán Foy also does a first-rate job of turning a snow-shrouded Irish council estate (actually Glasgow) into the stuff of nightmare. But if you have even the smallest shred of sympathy for the underclass, you might find *Citadel*'s "wipe the scum off the streets" solution a little morally troubling.

EXTRAS: Interviews with director Ciarán Foy and star Aneurin Barnard. **Ian Berriman**

When Ciarán Foy was 18 he was attacked and threatened with a syringe, then developed agoraphobia.

Round-up

THE DARK KNIGHT TRILOGY

Release Date: OUT NOW!

2005-2012 | 12 | 452 minutes | £77.99 (Blu-ray)

Long before the crackers appear in the shops, the first sign that Christmas is on its way is the arrival of lavish DVD box sets. This Ultimate Collector's Edition has all three Nolan Bat-movies, plus 90 minutes of new extras, including a chat between Nolan and *Superman*'s Richard Donner, and the IMAX sequences in their original aspect ratio. You also get a set of art cards, three diecast vehicles and a 48-page book.

DOCTOR WHO: THE MONSTER COLLECTION

Release Date: 30 September

PG | £9.99 each (DVD)

Clearly aimed at casual *Who* viewers, these themed collections bring together episodes from both the classic and modern series. The Dalek release, for example, combines their 1963 debut story with their most recent appearance, in "Asylum Of The Daleks". Another five DVDs do the same thing for the Cyberman, Silurians, Sontarans, the Master and Davros. Reasonably priced, these might make decent gifts.

4:44: LAST DAY ON EARTH

Release Date: OUT NOW!

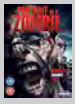
2012 | 15 | 82 minutes | £15.99 (DVD)

King Of New York/Bad Lieutenant director Abel Ferrara's latest is another arthouse apocalypse: at 4:44am, humanity will be destroyed. Mostly confined to a Manhattan apartment, it focuses on an actor and his artist girlfriend, as they make Skype calls to loved ones, have blazing rows and screw in intimate close-up... Languidly paced, with an air of improv, it's sometimes laughable, sometimes compelling. Unless you want to see Willem Defoe's pubes, 1998's *Last Night* is a better option, though.

PORTRAIT OF A ZOMBIE

Release Date: OUT NOW!

2012 | 18 | 85 minutes | £15.99 (DVD)



Both zombies and mockumentaries have been done to death lately, but this low-budget Irish indie succeeds by combining the two, as a documentary crew follows a Dublin family who keep their infected son Billy chained up. The way the film switches from found footage to a more conventional omniscient point of view is rather confusing, but its combination of social commentary, black humour and gore is generally a success. Geraldine McAlinden excels as Billy's dangerously deluded mum.

STAR TREK: ENTERPRISE SEASON TWO

Release Date: OUT NOW!

2002-2003 | 12 | 1,112 minutes | £69.99 (Blu-ray)

The *Trek* prequel's second year is a mixed bag. The likes of "Vanishing Point" and "The Crossing" reheat over-familiar plotlines, but there are some decent stories too (we are fond of "Dead Stop", a creepy tale about an automated repair station), and an appearance by the Borg is pleasing, even if it makes zero sense continuity-wise. Bonuses include "Uncharted Territory", a fascinating, very honest three-part documentary.

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Sharknado

Rain of terror

★★½☆☆ EXTRAS ★★☆☆☆

Release Date: 7 October
2013 | 15 | 93/89 minutes | £15.99 (DVD)/£17.99 (Blu-ray)
Distributor: Arrow Video
Director: Anthony C Ferrante
Cast: Ian Ziering, Cassie Scerbo, Jaason Simmons, Chuck Hittinger, Tara Reid, John Heard

Silly shark flicks aren't usually *SFX*'s bag, but this one's clearly set in an alternate universe: one where tornadoes only pick up thousands of sharks and where rather than proving fatal this only makes the aquatic killers more feisty. In this parallel world furious storms take place in blazing California sunshine, it can be waist-deep in your living room but barely moist underfoot outside, and riffing on "We're gonna need a bigger boat" is still considered witty.

In no reality does *Sharknado* constitute a classic. Yet somehow, despite its abysmal production values (hopelessly mismatched CG/practical effects, swathes of stock footage, laughably bad "vehicle interior" shots) and general air of desperate trolling (is there anything more pathetically try-hard than a B-movie that actively *wants* you to rip it to shreds on Twitter?), *Sharknado* remains surprisingly... bearable. You can see how, with a wittier script, it could even have been good. It keeps piling on the insanity until finally your resistance gives way. The *coup de grâce*: a man leaping into the jaws of a falling shark, then chainsawing his way out.

Sharks make bad interior designers.

But enough now! After this, the only "crazy shark scene" we want to see involves one crashing into a meeting room and taking out everyone brainstorming titles for future dumbass shark movies.

Extras: A behind-the-scenes featurette, a gag reel and a trailer.
Ian Berriman

? *Glee* star Cory Monteith's last two tweets before his death the following day were about *Sharknado*.

Blu-ray Debut

Battlestar Galactica

Twelve tribes called quest

★★★☆☆ EXTRAS ☆☆☆☆☆

Release Date: 7 October
1978 | PG | 124 minutes | £14.99 (Blu-ray)
Distributor: Universal Pictures
Director: Richard A Colla
Cast: Lorne Greene, Dirk Benedict, Richard Hatch, Jane Seymour

Context has never been kind to *Battlestar Galactica*. Arriving in the shadow of *Star Wars* – and never outrunning its rep as a brazen bit of boom-jumping – it now finds itself judged against its own 21st century reboot.

As comparisons go, it can be a cruel one. Pitted against its deeper, smarter, sexier successor, a series armed with knotty characterisation and trenchant subtext about the War on Terror, the original feels populated with pulp clichés and paper-thin protagonists (a post-9/11 perspective adds a weird retroactive resonance to its Cylon terror-strike). This intro tale – TV pilot turned theatrical release – is a choppy, rambling slog that could do with a weaponised metaphor or two.

Can you believe Starbuck was a *man*?

But while Lorne Greene's portentous turn as Adama is a flicker of what Edward James Olmos would accomplish, this *Battlestar* endures. The decades have inevitably bestowed a retro halo: modern Cylons may be cunning enough to aim for humanity's groin but nothing beats the chrome-plated, KITT-eyed cool of the original Centurions.

This high-def release plays to the show's wins: the loving pans of practical modelwork, the heart-slamming rush of Viper launches, the arcade game high of zapping Cylon Raiders. Forget the politics: just wallow in the flash, shallow '70s space opera joy of it all.

Extras: None. **Nick Setchfield**

? This movie cut shows the death of the traitorous Baltar, though he survived to bedevil the fleet in the series.

If only Shirley had a pool.

The Last Exorcism Part II

Abalam: a ding-dong

★★☆☆☆ EXTRAS ★★☆☆☆

Release Date: 30 September
2013 | 15 | 86 minutes | £17.99 (DVD)/£22.99 (Blu-ray)
Distributor: StudioCanal
Director: Ed Gass-Donnelly
Cast: Ashley Bell, Julia Garner, Spencer Treat Clark

Perhaps the most damning thing you can say about this uncalled-for sequel is that it makes you feel nostalgic for found footage. The first film used the format well, climaxing with a what-the-hell twist. The traditionally shot *Part II* is altogether lacking in surprises.

Ashley Bell returns as Nell, the naive young woman who was possessed by the demon Abalam. After months at a halfway house she's on the mend, but soon she's having visions of her dead dad and stroking herself on the face at night (Nell, you're doing it all wrong...).

The New Orleans setting adds a dash of colour, and allows the film to swerve the usual holy water/"Christ compels you" malarkey in favour of chickens-and-salt juju. A mildly interesting new wrinkle is that the demon's bond with Nell is presented as *love*, so it comes across like a spurned ex. The parallels with more banal brands of everyday evil aren't explored, though.

Indeed, *Part II* struggles to find *anything* original to say, falling back on a well-worn playbook of jump scares, black pupils and figures flitting past in the foreground. Having dropped that found-footage USP, all that's left is a cookie-cutter demonic possession flick.

Extras: A four-minute interview with producer Eli Roth; three brief online promos; the trailer. Both formats feature an "Extreme Uncut Edition". **Ian Berriman**

? The exorcism involves daubing "Croatoa" on Nell – a nod to the disappearance of the Roanoke colony in the 16th century.

THE TICK LIST

THE BEST NEW DVDS – GOT 'EM YET?

1 NEW ENTRY **STAR TREK: TNG SEASON FOUR**
Data meets his dad in the latest Blu-ray box set.
★★★★½ ☐

2 NEW ENTRY **IRON MAN 3**
Shane Black's sequel is talky, character-led, and ace.
★★★★☆ ☐

3 NEW ENTRY **PI**
Darren Aronofsky's nightmarish mathematical thriller comes to Blu-ray.
★★★★☆ ☐

4 NEW ENTRY **MAD MAX COLLECTION**
Three-film Blu-ray box set of Aussie apocalypse action.
★★★★☆ ☐

5 NEW ENTRY **THE LITTLE MERMAID**
The 1989 Disney animation comes to high def.
★★★★☆ ☐

6 ▼ **DEFIANCE SEASON ONE**
Finally, an SF show that's not afraid to look a bit silly!
★★★★☆ ☐

7 ▼ **DOCTOR WHO: SPEARHEAD FROM SPACE**
A Blu-ray Special Edition of Jon Pertwee's debut.
★★★★☆ ☐

8 ▼ **DOCTOR WHO: THE GREEN DEATH**
Aka "the one with the giant maggots".
★★★★☆ ☐

9 ▼ **THE CAR**
A high-def release for the 1977 killer car movie.
★★★★☆ ☐

10 ▼ **SPIDER BABY**
Blaxploitation director Jack Hill's freaky 1964 horror-comedy, with Lon Chaney.
★★★★☆ ☐

THE RULES: New releases push down old releases. DVDs drop out of the chart after three months.

WOT, NO DUD?

SOMEONE RELEASE THIS!

LA MAIN DU DIABLE

FILM | 1942

This creepy fantasy-horror was made in occupied France by Maurice Tourneur (father of Jacques). It concerns a struggling painter who buys a dismembered hand which makes him a successful artist. Unfortunately, by doing so he puts his soul in jeopardy...

The Returned
Series One

Lost in the Alps

★★★★½ EXTRAS ★★★★★

Release Date: OUT NOW!
2012 | 18 | 440 minutes | £29.99 (DVD)
Distributor: Universal Pictures
Director: Fabrice Gobert
Cast: Céline Sallette, Yara Pilartz, Pierre Perrier, Jenna Thiam

Even the zombies are beautiful in *The Returned*, a stunning, slow-build French chiller that recalls the cool cultishness of *Twin Peaks* with the austere, icy chic of the best of the recent Scando crime thrillers.

You can almost imagine the outraged "Pfft, mais non!" from series creator Fabrice Gobert had anyone deigned to suggest the handful of once deceased residents of the small town who one day arrive back home with no memory of having died, be lurching brain munchers. Instead these zombs are sexy and stylish and can run, talk, drink, smoke and screw attractively.

In this eight-part, character-led adap of the 2004 feature *Les Revenants*, each ep focuses on a different person: undead 15-year-old Camille, staring her missing teenage years in the face every time she sees her now 19-year-old twin Léna; lovesick Simon, whose pregnant fiancée now has a young daughter; and creepy, haunting child Victor, who may hold clues to how this all began.

"I hope we end up in *Viz*."

Eschewing genre tropes while dabbling with cannibals, cults and killers, this is horror for the highbrow. Like a sumptuous French meal, it's complex, impressive, incredible to look at and layered with different flavours. It's also occasionally confusing, sometimes hard to digest and in no hurry to get anywhere fast. Magnifique.

Extras: None. **Rosie Fletcher**

? To achieve the distinct look, Fabrice Gobert filmed establishing shots just as the sun was disappearing.

The Moth Diaries
Far from fang-tastic

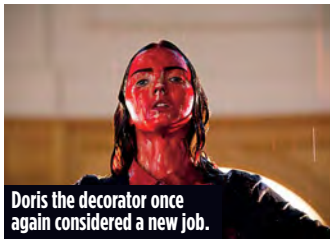
★☆☆☆☆ EXTRAS ☆☆☆☆☆

Release Date: OUT NOW!
2013 | 15 | 82 minutes | £12.99 (DVD)
Distributor: Lionsgate
Director: Mary Harron
Cast: Sarah Bolger, Anne Day-Jones, Lily Cole

Mary Harron won acclaim for the slasher theatrics of *American Psycho* over a decade ago, but her latest venture aims for the *Twilight* crowd. Although based on a book which pre-dates Stephenie Meyer, this gloom-ridden romp has plenty of similarities – including softcore romance, coming-of-age angst and lightweight frights.

Set in a girls' boarding school, it drums up sympathy for a sensitive 16-year-old Rebecca (Sarah Bolger). Rebecca's father, a troubled poet, committed suicide and she now finds herself writing reflectively in a personal journal, flirting with her dishy English teacher and bonding with the posh, pretty pupils that she shares class time with.

Soon shaking up the scene is Ernessa (Lily Cole) – a sexy but shifty new student whose presence coincides with a cluster of corpses. Rebecca is convinced that a vampire's arrived on campus but, inevitably, no one believes a word of it.


Doris the decorator once again considered a new job.

The biggest problem with *The Moth Diaries* is that nothing much happens. The cast is glamorous (this appears to be a school populated by models), and the visuals are often dark and dingy, but the (consistently hinted at) sexual threat of Cole's plasma-pillaging femme fatale fails to amount to anything of interest.

The end result is a redundant teen-horror romp which, in the space of its slender running time, actually begins to make you pine for the return of Bella and Edward. Now *that's* scary.

Extras: None. **Calum Waddell**

? Mary Harron's next project is a fictionalised account of the life and death of *Playboy* Playmate Anna Nicole Smith.

Lost Girl Season Two
50 Faes To Weave Your Mother

★★★★☆ EXTRAS ☆☆☆☆☆

Release Date: OUT NOW!
2012 | 15 | 929 minutes | £29.99 (DVD)
Distributor: Sony Pictures Home Entertainment
Creator: Michelle Lovretta
Cast: Anna Silk, ~~Chris Martin~~ sorry, Kris Holden-Reid

The second season of the show with the biggest disparity between quality of episode titles ("Brotherfae Of The Wolves", "The Girl Who Fae'd With Fire") and quality of episodes makes the first look like a mere warm-up act. Pervier, sillier and more ambitious, it once again combines burlesque with *Buffy* to create a style of storytelling that, admittedly, is an acquired taste. It's worth acquiring though, otherwise you miss such gems as a shrunken succubus trapped in a clock with a psychopathic djinn, or a Fae travel agent with a brutal adherence to her queuing system.

This season succubus Bo continues to refuse to take side in the Dark Fae/Light Fae conflict, acting as a kind of supernatural PI as arc plots drag her inexorably back into Fae affairs. There's a slimy (but highly watchable) new Ash (Fae boss) who seems to have designs on Bo. Main male totty Dyson has been mystically robbed of his ability to love Bo, which makes him look like a puppy that's eaten a lemon. And there's an ancient evil. Because there's aways an ancient evil.

"Bummer of an ant bite, Mitch."

The concoction doesn't always work. Guest star villains are often far too '60s *Batman*, and a few too many cases-of-the-week feel rushed and halfhearted. But the central cast is magnificent, the dialogue is pleasingly school-of-Whedon, and the show is an equal opportunities sexual objectifier.

But those episode titles...? Oh dear.

Extras: None. **Dave Golder**

? *Lost Girl: The Game*, a mystery-style hidden object game, is available as a free download from iTunes.

Outpost 11

★★☆☆☆ EXTRAS ★★½☆☆

Release Date: 30 September
2012 | 18 | 92 minutes | £15.99 (DVD/Blu-ray)

We can now declare that steampunk's gone too far. Someone thought that combining it with *The Thing* would make a fantastic movie.

Three British Army soldiers are stationed in the Arctic Circle as a last line of defence against the Prussian hordes. Isolated and alone, they soon come under attack from psychotropic spiders.

There are some genuinely creepy moments, but *Outpost 11* lacks three essential qualities that made *The Thing* a classic: a good script, direction and performances. Any attempt at creating suspense ends in a game of "Where's that pesky boom mike got to now?"

The only notable thing is the effects: all practical, they're a cut above your average low budget sci-fi horror.

Extras: Commentary; deleted scenes; bloopers; behind-the-scenes stuff. **Jess Collett**

Frankenstein's Army

★★★½☆ EXTRAS ★★☆☆☆

Release Date: 30 September
2013 | 18 | 80 minutes | £12.99 (DVD)

It's rare that a found-footage horror stands out these days, but Richard Raaphorst's debut does just that.

Set during WW2, it follows some Red Army soldiers who stumble upon a monstrous Nazi experiment – handily, while making a film.

It's well directed and convincingly nasty. The soldiers' first encounter with Frankenstein's monstrous creations is genuinely tense. The bizarre patchwork creature design is undoubtedly the film's biggest strength. Okay, you may wonder why anyone would bother to attach a wind turbine to someone's face, but hey, we're not mad scientists.

Characterisation is thin at best but that's forgiveable. This is all about the monsters.

Extras: A Making Of (30 minutes); the trailer. **Will Salmon**

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Time Bandits

Let's do the time dwarf again

★★★★☆ EXTRAS ★★★☆☆

Release Date: OUT NOW!

1981 | PG | 116 minutes | £19.99 (DVD/Blu-ray)/£24.99 (Steelbook Blu-ray)

Distributor: Arrow Video

Director: Terry Gilliam

Cast: Craig Warnock, David Rappaport, Kenny Baker, John Cleese, Sean Connery, Shelley Duvall

THE HISTORY- hopping film which boosted Terry Gilliam into auteurdom has hit Blu-ray before, but Optimum's 2009 release boasted lamentably few extras and a sub-standard print. Today we have a 2k-resolution restoration from the original negative; the vibrant colour is consistent and scratches have been removed, and the sound's also been remastered.

The story of an 11-year-old and his quest through time in the company of a gang of little people, it has dollops of fever-dream surrealism and rather more executions than you might expect from a family adventure. Proof that the '80s were *the* decade for big-screen fantasy. **EXTRAS:** Alas, there's no commentary. An exploration of the

Karl hated it when light switches moved.

restoration process (three minutes) is followed by a run of talking-head interviews. "Chasing Time Bandits" (20 minutes) is a frank interview with Gilliam and "Writing The Film That Dares Not Speak Its Name" (16 minutes) gives us co-writer Michael Palin. "The Effects Of Time Bandits" (15 minutes) is a tedious chat with camera FX guy Ken Houston, while "Playing Evil" (nine minutes) features an avuncular David Warner. Designers James Acheson and Milly Burns talk about "The Costumes Of The Time Bandits" (13 minutes) and "The Look Of Time Bandits" (11 minutes) respectively. Burns also narrates "From Script To Screen" (eight minus) about working from Gilliam's notes. You also get a collector's booklet. **Dave Bradley**

? Jonathan Pryce was Gilliam's first choice for Evil – a fact which David Warner found out later when he read a book on *Brazil*.

Here Comes The Devil

★★★☆☆ EXTRAS ☆☆☆☆☆

Release Date: OUT NOW!

2012 | 18 | 98 minutes | £15.99 (DVD)

IF YOU MISS THE heady days of sleazy '70s Euro horror, this Mexican film should scratch an itch. It opens with lesbian humping; moments later, a couple talk one another into a froth by swapping earliest-sexual-experience anecdotes.

Their son and daughter are the focus; lost on a mountainside overnight, they return sporting mysterious bruises. Mum and dad add two and two together and enact a terrible vengeance... but the correct's answer five. Or 666.

Featuring shocking violence, odd zooms reminiscent of the late Jess Franco, and a psychedelic flashback that mixes pierced nipples and sinister rocks, visually it's a spicy affair. Sadly, the final reel doesn't quite deliver on the ominous set-up.

EXTRAS: None. **Ian Berriman**

Dead Sushi

Rice Warriors

★★½☆☆ EXTRAS ★★½☆☆

Release Date: 23 September

2012 | 18 | 87 minutes | £12.99 (DVD)/£14.99 (Blu-ray)

Distributor: Monster Pictures

Director: Noboru Iguchi

Cast: Rina Takeda, Shigeru Matsuzaki

THE SORT OF film which promotes the notion that Japanese culture is utterly warped, *Dead Sushi* makes *Piranha 2: Flying Killers* look sensible. James Cameron's infamous 1981 directorial debut also featured airborne fish, but at least they were *alive*.

This film's reanimated foodstuffs not only glide around in poorly-rendered CGI swarms, but can sing and have sex with one another. Other madcap elements include a "sushi-roll battleship", decapitation by squid and an axe-wielding bloke with the head of a tuna. Don't ask.

By the standards of director Noboru Iguchi, whose previous credits include the ultra-gory *The Machine Girl* (and before that, bukkake and enema videos...) it's cute, family-friendly fun.

Should have gone for a burrito.

Sadly, what really sticks in your mind (not to mention the craw) is not the wacky mayhem, the karate action, or the OTT performances, but the ruinously crass "comedy" sexism, with waitresses stripping down to skimpies so salarymen can eat sushi off their cleavage, and a creep pondering, as a young woman has her face chewed off, whether he should reach out to grope her breasts. Now that's *really* fishy.

EXTRAS: The director and his female lead feature in a Making Of (11 minutes), are interviewed (two minutes) and appear on stage at the premiere (10 minutes). You also get footage of a screening's sushi-eating contest (13 minutes), the trailer, and a choice of English or Japanese audio. **Ian Berriman**

? Noboru Iguchi was inspired by both the success of *Piranha 3D* in Japan, and his love of 1978's *Attack Of The Killer Tomatoes*.

Deadman Wonderland

★★½☆☆ EXTRAS ★★★☆☆

Release Date: OUT NOW!

2011 | 18 | 275 minutes | £29.99 (DVD)/£44.99 (Blu-ray)

THIS ERRATIC anime shocker is modestly entertaining but underwhelming.

It's a bit like *Battle Royale*. A quailing teenage boy is framed for slaughtering his entire class, and sent to a prison with death games, gladiatorial contests, lurid torture and superhuman psychos.

The gore is plentiful (though other anime go further); the visuals waver between shonky and striking; the story's very silly.

The show becomes unfocused later, with too many new characters blocking each other, and the big end battle leaves the main plot unresolved. The reason (as you might guess) is that the show's lifted from a longer comic.

EXTRAS: Commentaries for three of the 12 episodes, promo material, plus an "extra" made-for-video episode. **Andrew Osmond**

COMING SOON

30 SEPTEMBER

DOCTOR WHO: TERROR OF THE ZYGONS This Tom Baker four-parter features shape-shifting aliens and a cyborg Loch Ness Monster.
LIFEFORCE Tobe Hooper's 1985 SF horror about energy-sucking space vampires comes to Blu-ray.
TWIXT Val Kilmer plays a Stephen King-esque author and Ben Chaplin plays the ghost of Edgar Allan Poe in Francis Ford Coppola's oddball horror.

7 OCTOBER

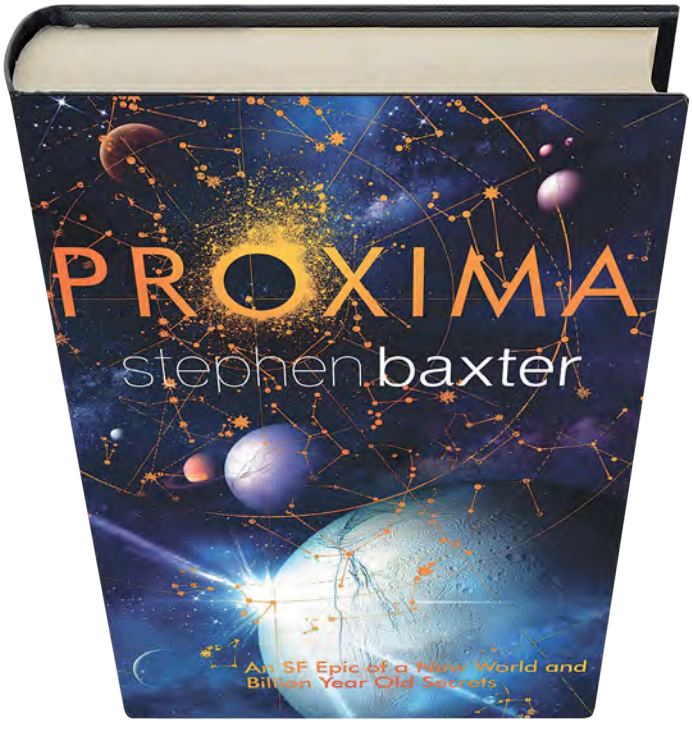
CARRIE A Blu-ray release for Brian De Palma's 1976 film of the Stephen Kingnovel about a troubled teen with telekinetic powers.
EPIC A miniaturised teenage girl helps the tiny Leafmen fight the evil Boggans in this animated adventure.
THE FINAL PROGRAMME Jon Finch plays Jerry Cornelius in this 1973 film of Michael Moorcock's novel.
THE SWORD IN THE STONE Disney's 1963 take on TH White's Arthurian novel comes to Blu-ray.
YOUNG FRANKENSTEIN Mel Brooks's 1973 horror spoof gets a high-def release.

14 OCTOBER

AFTER EARTH Will and Jaden Smith's father and son crash-land on a future Earth teeming with killer critters in M Night Shyamalan's latest.
HERCULES Disney's 1997 animated take on the hero from Greek mythology gets a Blu-ray release.
V/H/S 2 Gareth Evans (*The Raid*) is one of the directors of the latest found-footage horror anthology.
WAREHOUSE 13 SEASON FOUR Twenty more episodes of the show about secret agents who retrieve supernatural artefacts.

21 OCTOBER

AMERICAN HORROR STORY: ASYLUM The second run of the horror series, this time set in an institution for the criminally insane.
CARRY ON SCREAMING The Carry On team's horror spoof (best of the whole series, we're saying) gets a Blu-ray release.
CURSE OF CHUCKY The seventh film about the doll possessed by a serial killer's soul follows on from the finale of *Child's Play 3*.
THE FURY A high-def release for Brian De Palma's OTT 1978 film about a girl with telekinetic powers.
THE PURGE One night every year all criminal activity becomes legal in this thriller set in a near-future USA.
WORLD WAR Z Brad Pitt stars in this globe-hopping, mega-budget take on Max Brooks's "oral history of the zombie war".



Proxima

Per ardua ad astra

★★★★☆

Release Date: 19 September
485 pages | £20.00 (hardback)/£6.99 (ebook)
Author: Stephen Baxter
Publisher: Gollancz

A BOOK ABOUT A RISKY colony mission to a tidally locked planet... no, we're not talking about *Crash*, by some bloke called Guy Haley *(Never heard of him – Reviews Ed)*, but *Proxima*, Stephen Baxter's latest. Inspired by the same bit of science as *Crash* – the discovery of exoplanets all over the galaxy – it's fascinating to see another writer's take on similar subject matter.

Protagonist Yuri is an out-of-time remnant of "The Heroic Generation", whose energy-intensive geo-engineering efforts to sort out global warming caused more problems than they solved. Popped into cryo-stasis by parents hoping for a better future, he wakes up in a world that resents him for his association with the disastrous past. He's not treated well, and that includes being shipped off on the dodgy, bare-bones colony effort to the Alpha Centauri star system.

Yuri's struggles to remain alive in such an unforgiving place, and the mysteries he uncovers on the way, form one of the novel's two major strands. The other strand takes place in the solar system, where the cold war between the expansionist Chinese Empire and the constituent countries of the United Nations is hotting up. Alien artefacts have been discovered on Mercury, and the UN isn't sharing.

It's not often you can agree with the hyperbole on the back of a book, but calling Baxter "Arthur C Clarke's natural successor" is bang on the money. Clarkeian tropes such as mysterious extra-terrestrial leavings, deep time and the sinister majesty of the cosmos are greatly in evidence here. Baxter takes a worthwhile chunk of time detailing a fascinating planetary ecology for "Per Ardua" (as the colonists end up calling their world). This is ingeniously alien, and includes a banded series of biospheres. Rather than being built of microscopic cells, like Earth life, the creatures of Per Ardua are made of much larger, interchangeable "stems", with the result that they behave somewhat like predatory Lego, brutally disassembling one another and then using the parts to create their own young. The depth and ingenuity of this part of the tale has one thinking of Clarke's efforts in *Rendezvous With Rama*. Similarly well set out are Baxter's various modes of space travel, which include a multi-year colony mission, a one man cosmic dash, and a fascinating take on interstellar sailing, where the vessel contains tens of thousands of disposable sails, each invested with its own consciousness.

Baxter's specialty is hard hard SF (and he's very good at it). The flipside of this is that occasionally his characters can seem remote, and although those in *Proxima* are

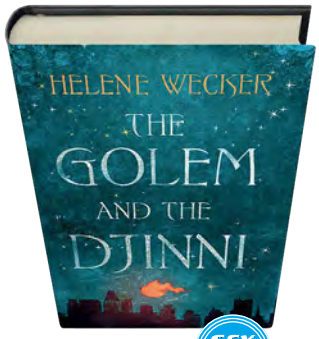
Calling Stephen Baxter "Arthur C Clarke's natural successor" is bang on the money

mostly well rounded, there's a fair bit of "as you know, Bob," expository dialogue towards the beginning of the novel, Australian billionaire Sir Michael King being particularly guilty of this. Having said that, this is only Baxter's solution to a particular problem in writing hard SF – how do you convey to the reader the science and history of your future era? There are other solutions, all equally as flawed. This is simply the one Baxter favours.

Despite the author's hard SF bias, he's always been invested in the human side of things, and a large part of *Proxima* is concerned with the stresses that climate change will inevitably place on geopolitics, as well as the ethics of artificial intelligence and the flexible morality people require to survive in difficult circumstances.

There's a lot more in *Proxima* besides – alternate realities, wormholes, Teilhardian galactic consciousnesses, and a couple of mysteries set up for the next book, on both human and cosmological scales. That's right, this is number one of two – but we're sufficiently hooked to want to come back for more. Classic Baxter. **Guy Haley**

? "Per ardua ad astra" is the RAF's motto. The officer who suggested it saw it in *The People Of The Mist*, by H Rider Haggard.



SFX RECOMMENDS

The Golem And The Djinni

Jewish and Arab myths meet

★★★★★

Release Date: OUT NOW!
496 pages | £16.99 (hardback)/£8.99 (ebook)
Author: Helene Wecker
Publisher: Blue Door

UNFORGETTABLE IMAGES leap from the pages of *The Golem And The Djinni*. A palace of glass and gold glittering in the Syrian desert. The bustle and heartbeat of New York in 1899, populated with a cast of intriguing characters, two of them creatures of magic. Chava is a golem crafted by a rogue rabbi; her intended master dead and buried at sea, she's free to do as she wants. Ahmad is a djinni, a spirit of fire and of the desert, trapped in human form by a bracelet of iron. Both must confront the same question: what is the price of freedom when you have been created only to serve the will of others?

Around this theme Helene Wecker's debut novel crafts a shimmering fantasy masterpiece. *The Golem And The Djinni* takes us deep into the immigrant experience of 19th century America, and the contrasting cultures of Judaism and Islam that meet there. But the grand themes never overwhelm the human story that the author weaves from the lives of two quite inhuman characters.

Comparisons with *Jonathan Strange & Mr Norrell* come easily, but Wecker's novel achieves a depth of meaning and human emotion that Susanna Clarke's work never truly touched. *The Golem And The Djinni* is a classic of fantasy literature that readers will discover with joy for many years to come. **Damien Walter**

? Wecker began writing about a Jewish girl and an Arab-American boy, later swapping them for supernatural creatures.

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Ancillary Justice

Revenge – the AI way

★★★★☆

Release Date: 1 October
386 pages | £7.99 (paperback)/£4.99 (ebook)
Author: Ann Leckie
Publisher: Orbit

INTELLIGENT STARSHIPS are one of those space opera tropes that never seem to go out of fashion – and that's something we're very happy about. Most famously depicted as the immensely sarcastic Mind-driven ships in Iain M Banks's Culture novels, they're a fascinating way of exploring the gap between humanity and artificial intelligence. This latest SF novel has an intriguing new spin on the concept.

Ancillary Justice is the story of Breq, a woman who used to be a starship. Two decades ago she was Justice of Toren, a law-enforcing vessel of the Radch Empire, able to interact with the world through multiple "ancillary" human bodies. Then the ship was destroyed as part of a complex plan involving the ruler of the Radch, and Breq is the only surviving ancillary – but now she's close to finally getting some revenge on those responsible...

A sharply written space opera with a richly imagined sense of detail and place, this debut novel from Ann Leckie works as both an evocative science fiction tale and an involving character study. Heavily reminiscent of the novels of CJ Cherryh, it's also a strongly female-driven piece, tackling ideas about politics and gender in a way that's both engaging and provocative. It may have a different flavour to many of the bigger UK-based space opera giants, but *Ancillary Justice* is a gripping read that's well worth a look.

Saxon Bullock

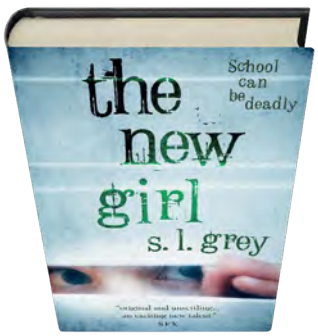
? Leckie is already at work on the next in the series – *Ancillary Sword* – which should be arriving in late 2014.

The New Girl

Sadly lacking in Zooey Deschanel

★★★★½

Release Date: 3 October
298 pages | £7.99 (paperback)/£4.11 (ebook)
Author: SL Grey
Publisher: Corvus



***THE NEW GIRL* IS THE** third book in a loose trilogy that began with 2011's *The Mall*. Whereas that book and its successor (*The Ward*) focused on everyday South Africans wandering into the "downside" – a literal underworld populated by Clive Barker-esque creatures – *The New Girl* brings Them to Us...

Penter Ulliel is a Deputy Node Liason despatched to the upside on a mysterious mission. With her is "Jane", the pretty-bloody-spooky girl of the title. Ryan and Tara – two staff members at Crossley College – are intrigued by Jane (though for different reasons) and investigate her, with disastrous results...

For the most part, *The New Girl* is a surprisingly funny, deeply weird horror novel with very little actual horror. The chapters focusing on Penter struggling to understand humanity are almost SF.

It's still petrifying, though. Grey (actually duo Sarah Lotz and Louis Greenberg) has a knack for wringing tension from the smallest things – an oddly-phrased email, or a poster for an after-school group. The book is suffused in claustrophobia, particularly in the scenes where the predatory Ryan stalks a child. Boldly, we see a third of the novel through his eyes.

There are echoes of David Cronenberg and *Brazil*, and a handful of hilarious pop riffs (the *Masterchef* one is a peach), but it feels like Grey is doing something genuinely fresh here. **Will Salmon**

? Sarah Lotz's upcoming solo novel *The Three* was snapped up by Hodder in less than a day, for a six-figure sum.

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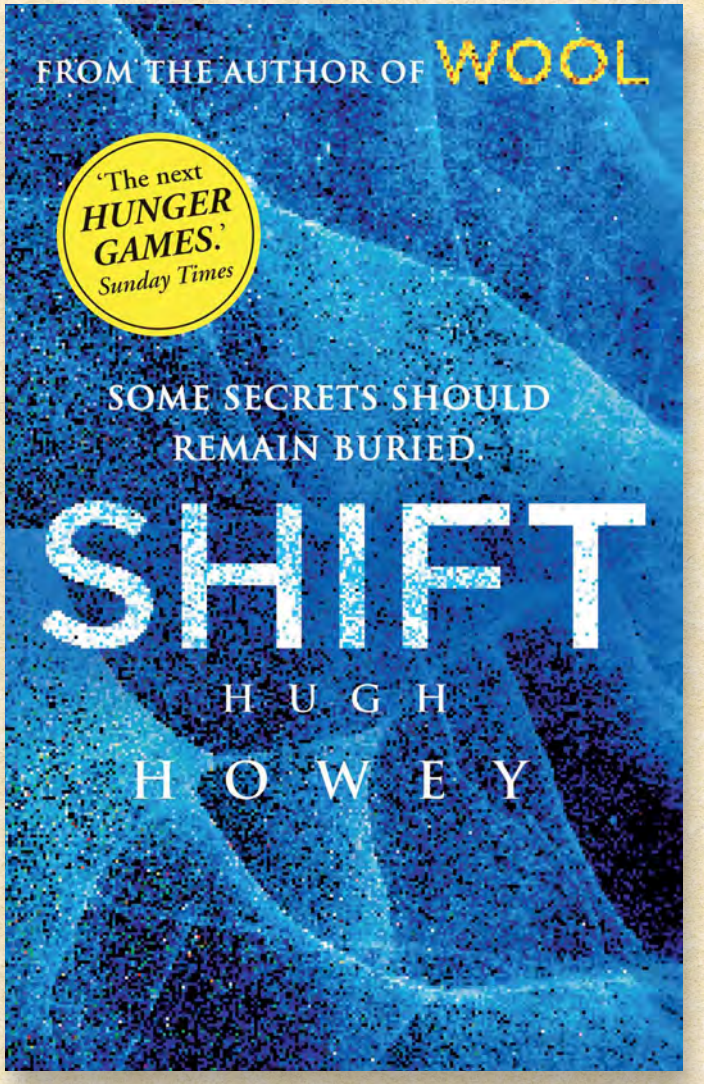

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Star Trek: The Art Of Juan Ortiz

A set of posters to stun

★★★★☆

Release Date: OUT NOW!
112 pages | £24.99 (hardback)
Publisher: Titan Books

STAR TREK HASN'T produced much in the way of classic posters – *The Motion Picture*'s "rainbow" design is really the only one that's iconic. This collection of 80 pieces of retro-flavoured art corrects that.

Juan Ortiz set out to produce a poster for every episode of the original series (including pilot "The Cage") – originally for his own entertainment; latterly for CBS. The results are superb, and with its large format and good quality paper this collection presents them handsomely.

An introductory interview explains how the project came about, while notes at the back explain the artist's inspirations – everything from Russian film posters of the '30s, boxing match flyers and *Yellow Submarine* to the work of Saul Bass, Terry Gilliam and Spanish book cover illustrator Joaquin Pertierra.

The one annoyance is the "distressed" treatment given to the posters – fold lines, creases and grubby marks. This approach reaches its nadir on the art for "Amok Time", which looks like it's been dropped in a country lane and stamped on. Why create 80 brilliant illustrations, then trash them? Highly illogical. **Ian Berriman**

? Ortiz's *Star Trek* designs are also available on all manner of products: t-shirts, coasters and – our favourite – shot glasses.

The Winter Witch

Silent witchness

★★★★☆

Release Date: OUT NOW!
464 pages | £18.99 (hardback)/£9.99 (ebook)
Author: Timothy Zahn
Publisher: Century

OFTEN, THE WORLD-building involved in a historical novel is much harder than it is for a straight fantasy or SF; it's difficult to capture a previous time without imposing modern sensibilities. This novel manages it well though, delivering a slice of 19th century Wales full of atmosphere and music.

Morgana Pritchard is being married to a man she barely knows, the widower Cai Jenkins. If you think a few long conversations might help them get to know each other, think again – Morgana is mute, and hasn't spoken since she was a young child. She's also possibly a witch, since unfortunate things keep happening to those who upset her. Morgana soon learns she's not the only one, though, as she comes across people in her new town determined to take Cai and his farm, Ffynnon Las, away from her – for Ffynnon Las houses powerful magic.

Paula Brackston wonderfully conveys a rising sense of dread as Morgana struggles to protect her new home and family through a bitter winter. A frightened village can easily turn on a strange outsider, and even without her abilities, Morgana's lack of speech marks her out as different. Her complete lack of verbal communication is frustrating at times – she doesn't even try to communicate vital information to her husband – but this is a minor quibble, and doesn't detract from an enjoyable, if sometimes uncomfortable, read. **Rhian Drinkwater**

? Paula Brackston is related to Sir Humphry Davy, who discovered elements such as potassium, calcium and magnesium.

Children Of Fire

Flaming awful

★★½☆☆

Release Date: OUT NOW!
490 pages | £16.99 (hardback)/£9.99 (ebook)
Author: Drew Karpyshyn
Publisher: Del Rey

IT'S AN OLD REVIEWER'S dilemma: the more books you read, the harder you are to please. Where a jaded reviewer's eye – *this* jaded reviewer's eye – sees only a painfully dull set of clichés, it's impossible not to be aware that a reader newer to epic fantasy may find marvellous vistas to fire the imagination in this series opener.

Then again, some books are just not very good. Drew Karpyshyn's core concept for *Children Of Fire* is suitably epic – four children, born on the same night in four different lands, hold the power to unleash Chaos on the world – but the execution is functional at best. Characters don't have conversations, they recite plot and worldbuilding information to each other. Descriptive paragraphs are lavished on mages' cool tattoos, but the settings are painted with miserly, unmemorable strokes.

But the real problem is the pacing. The disjointed narrative bounces through the children's lives with ADHD abandon – one chapter we're with Cassandra at home aged four; next she's somewhere else, and eight – so we don't get to know places or people before we're swept along to the next badly-staged setpiece. It's hard to get caught up in a story when no time is spent building atmosphere or tension, and you know you'll be meeting a completely different set of thinly-sketched characters in a few pages' time. New to epic fantasy? Start somewhere else. **Nic Clarke**

? Drew Karpyshyn was the lead writer on *Mass Effect*, and has also written *Star Wars* and *Mass Effect* tie-in novels.

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Steelheart

Far from heroic superheroes

★★★★☆

Release Date: 26 September
240 pages | £20.99 (hardback)/£12.99 (paperback)/£6.99 (ebook)
Author: Brandon Sanderson
Publisher: Gollancz

In this pacy new YA series, Brandon Sanderson takes a break from epic fantasy and imagines a world where superheroes spit on the idea that "with great power comes great responsibility". In the dark, dystopian *Steelheart*, great power enables superheroes, dubbed "Epics", to do whatever the hell they please, fighting amongst themselves and ruining the world in the process.

The worst Epic of them all is Steelheart, the nasty Superman-a-like ruler of Newcago. Ordinary, un-super David Charleston has sworn to kill him, because Steelheart killed his father. But how does an ordinary man kill an indestructible Epic?

Superhero lore demands that for every superpower that's bestowed there's also super weakness, and Sanderson plays on this to great effect. While David knows that Steelheart can be hurt, he doesn't know *how*. Teaming up with the Reckoners, a band of Epic-killers, he devises a plan to uncover Steelheart's weakness.

While Sanderson's bigger books take time to get going, *Steelheart* hits the ground running. The author spins a terrifically tall tale, packaging the superheroic action into compelling, punchy chapters that keep you reading. That's the appeal. It's a fast, feisty read, with characters that are skillfully drawn, assassinations, gunfights, physics-bending motorcycle chases and a world you can't wait to hear more about. **Dean Evans**

? Sanderson had the idea after someone cut him up in traffic and he thought that if he was a supervillain, he'd blow up their car!

Your Brother's Blood

Walkin' down The Road

★★★★☆

Release Date: OUT NOW!
326 pages | £14.99 (paperback)/£8.05 (ebook)
Author: David Towsey
Published: Jo Fletcher Books

Ever since poor Duane Jones accidentally caught a bullet at the end of *Night Of The Living Dead*, the zombie story has felt like the natural home for mixing up social commentary with action. So it goes with David Towsey's debut novel, an undead Western about fear and religious persecution.

Towsey's future looks a lot like the past. It's 2917, and Earth has retreated into a pre-industrial way of life. Technology and culture are treated with suspicion, and the Bible with unthinking reverence. There's one big difference though – zombies.

Thomas is one of these "Walkin'". They don't want to eat your flesh, but exist as a despised underclass. Burnt and horribly disfigured, Thomas is afraid of seeing his family again, but naturally, circumstances reunite him with his daughter...

Despite sitting in two genres, *Your Brother's Blood* manages to largely avoid relying on recycled tropes. There's little in the way of gun-toting, zombie-blasting carnage here. Instead, this is a sparse, elegantly written novel about family ties. The influence of Cormac McCarthy is keenly felt, and Thomas and Mary's relationship is moving without being overly sentimental.

Some may find it a little on the slow side, but the deft world-building and focus on small-scale human tragedy make for an absorbing alternative to *World War Z*-style epics. **Will Salmon**

? David Towsey can only write while listening to music. His playlist includes Elliott Smith, Ben Harper and The Mars Volta.

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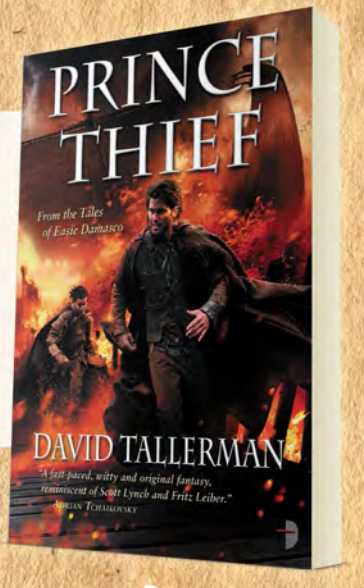

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Master Of Dragons

Elves vs Dwarves, round two

★★★☆☆

Release Date: October
416 pages | £8.99 (paperback)
Author: Chris Wraight
Publisher: The Black Library

The Time Of Legends series takes fans 2,500 years into the past of the *Warhammer* fantasy universe, to the days of the legendary Sigmar Heldenhammer, the greatest hero and founder of the Empire. This was the era that shaped the world of *Warhammer*, so the tales are intended to be epic in both scope and scale.

Master Of Dragons has epic qualities, but feels a bit like eating a side dish while waiting for the main feast. It chronicles the War of Vengeance between Elves and Dwarves that, in the context of the *Warhammer* timeline, will lead to the fall of both civilisations, clearing the way for the rise of men. This is the second part of the saga, following on from *The Great Betrayal*, and while it contains its own complete story arc, it does feel like only an episode in a larger narrative. The titular Master, Prince Imladrik, may be Uluthan's greatest warrior, but reads like a secondary character who's accidentally been made the star of the story.

Chris Wraight tells a well-paced adventure tale that will likely please those following the series, but as a standalone read the book is lacking the characters to really inspire a sense of heroic deeds. **Damien Walter**

? Wraight's advice for budding writers: 1. Take criticism on the chin. 2. It's the characters, stupid.

About Time 7

Views on new *Who* one and two

★★★★☆

Release Date: OUT NOW!
463 pages | £22.49 (paperback)
Author: Tat Wood
Publisher: Mad Norwegian Press

Editor of one of the best *Doctor Who* fanzines of the '80s, Tat Wood is one of the series' most erudite critics. Now that the passage of eight years has provided some distance he's finally turned his attention to the revived show's first two series.

Does he like them? Oh yes (although snarky digs at Steven Moffat's pet tropes suggest there's a storm coming). That doesn't prevent ruthless nitpicking, though. Sometimes this seems churlish, but more often it's incisive. Crucially, Wood appreciates that criticism is more than holding a rule against a pile of plotholes, and is still willing to pronounce a flawed story a success if it possesses the right spirit or ambition.

A particular strength of earlier volumes was the way they placed decades-old episodes within their historical context, but in 2013, few people need to be told about, say, Jamie Oliver's school dinners crusade; overseas fans may well benefit, though.

Discussions of historical dating are offputtingly dry, and while many of the 28 essays go off on fascinating oddball tangents, a few get tediously bogged down in trying to rationalise contradictory continuity points. Still, even if you skip all that, the quality of the sections providing nitpicking, context and critique make this essential reading for the thinking *Who* fan. **Ian Berriman**

? Choice essay titles include "Gay Agenda? What Gay Agenda?" and "Is Arthur The Horse A Companion?"

The Republic Of Thieves

SFX RECOMMENDS

More lies from Locke Lamora

★★★★★

Release Date: 10 October
688 pages | £14.99 (hardback)/£7.49 (ebook)
Author: Scott Lynch
Publisher: Gollancz

Perelandro's balls! Seven years after *Red Seas Under Red Skies*, Scott Lynch continues the story of Locke Lamora and Jean Tannen. Lynch released his first book, *The Lies Of Locke Lamora*, alongside Joe Abercrombie's *The Blade Itself* and Tom Lloyd's *The Stormcaller*. The Lord Grimdark has since written six books; Lloyd seven. Personal demons have kept Lynch from keeping pace.

Republic Of Thieves is a welcome return for the loveable Camorri grifters, who ended their previous pirate adventure poisoned and bickering over a single antidote. We pick up the story in Lashain – Locke is dying and Jean has spent their money trying to save him. A remedy comes from an unexpected source. The price? Rig an election in the city of Karthain. There's a catch: Sabetha, Locke's only love, is working for the opposition, trying to do the same thing.

Lynch has lost none of his flair or ambition. *Republic Of Thieves* deftly interweaves the election-rigging with a backstory set five years before the events of the first book. Both feature Sabetha and, if *Red Seas Under Red Skies* was a bromantic yarn, *Republic* has a romantic centre, upon which Lynch layers con and counter-con, twist and counter twist, two new cities and a huge cast of characters, all of it glued together by irresistible prose and fruity, insult-stuffed dialogue. Welcome back Scott. We've missed you. **Dean Evans**

? Scott Lynch also does SF. *Queen Of The Iron Sands* is a free online serial. Read it: http://www.scottlynch.us/ironsands.html.

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★★★★☆ ☐

THE RULES: New releases push down old releases. Books drop out of the chart after three months.

BULLET TIME

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Authors: Paula M Block and Terry Erdmann

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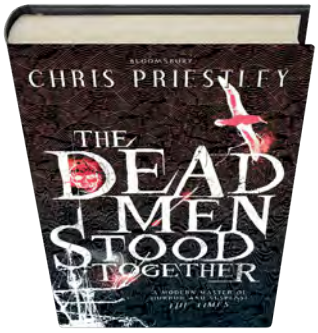


The Dead Men Stood Together

Rime reloaded

★★★★☆

Release Date: OUT NOW!
213 pages | £10.99 (hardback)/£8.54 (ebook)
Author: Chris Priestley
Publisher: Bloomsbury

THE AUTHOR OF SHORT story collection *Tales Of Terror From The Black Ship* brings us more nautical chills with this retelling of Coleridge's "The Rime Of The Ancient Mariner". You know the one: water, water everywhere, dead albatrosses, cursed sailors. That one.

Priestley's horror stories are spooky in the manner of MR James. The fact that they're for kids is frankly irrelevant – they still give you the willies. His other gift – for crisp, uncluttered writing – is marvellously utilised to render Coleridge's poem as prose. A new young protagonist gives us our viewpoint, a fresh ending provides salvation, and much atmosphere is spun from Coleridge's words along the way. **Guy Haley**

Coleridge – who was a philosopher as well as a poet – came up with the oft-used phrase "suspension of disbelief".

The Clockwork Scarab

Steampunk 90210

★★☆☆☆

Release Date: 1 October
360 pages | £10.99 (hardback)/£9.26 (ebook)
Author: Colleen Gleason
Publisher: Chronicle Books

AT THE HEART OF THIS YA novel is a ripping *Girls' Own* adventure, as Eveline Stoker (niece of Bram) and Alvermina Holmes (niece of Sherlock), who are working for Irene Adler, try to uncover the mysterious deaths of rich and titled teenaged girls.

Unfortunately it gets clogged up with descriptions of outfits and potential boyfriends; every time the action looks like getting going, an airhead interlude occurs.

On top of this, the geography of London is confused, the history of the 19th century is not really grasped and the British class structure is misunderstood (Inspector Grayling bounces between classes as if on a social bungee cord). A nice idea ruined by lack of attention to detail. **Miriam McDonald**

The Victorians set real scarabs into gold jewellery, the iridescent carapaces making pretty "stones".

The Falconer

Nineteenth century *Buffy*

★★½☆☆

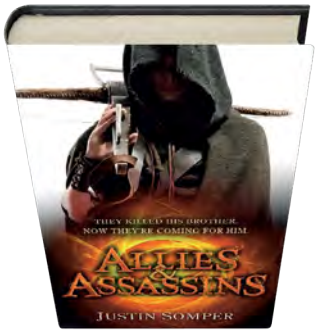
Release Date: 26 September
368 pages | £12.99 (hardback)/£6.99 (ebook)
Author: Elizabeth May
Publisher: Gollancz

THERE'S AN ART TO writing trilogies; balancing the plotlines so that every section has a payoff but keeps you wanting more. It's normally the middle chapter that's tricky, but this debut novel shows it's just as easy to mess up the opening.

In a steampunked Scotland in 1844, Aileana spends her nights killing faeries – nightmarish creatures who murdered her mother – and her days attending balls and trying not to think about how she'll ever land a husband.

Two-dimensional characters plus a clichéd "dangerous but sexy warrior with a past" make *The Falconer* a laborious read, but the worst is still to come, when the book literally ends *in the middle of a battle*. Will you be captivated enough to buy the next instalment? Unlikely. **Rhian Drinkwater**

The faeries are inspired by May's studies – she's working for a PhD in anthropology, specialising in Scottish folklore.



Allies & Assassins

Prince Charmless

★★☆☆☆

Release Date: 19 September
416 pages | £12.99 (hardback)/£6.99 (ebook)
Author: Justin Somper
Publisher: Atom

TOUTED AS *GAME OF THRONES* for teens, the first in Justin Somper's new series aims high. Unfortunately, it fails to achieve its lofty aspirations.

Set in the land of Archenfield, the story wheezes into life when Prince Anders is assassinated, leaving younger brother Jared to take his place. With the help of physician's niece Asta, Jared must find out who, in a court full of schemers, killed his brother, and keep the realm intact.

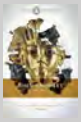
As each sentence clunks into place, it's clear that Somper is no George RR Martin. The dialogue is horrible, the characters are vanilla and the plot is predictable. Ultimately though, *Allies & Assassins*' biggest crime is that it's just rather boring. **Rob Power**

Justin Somper's other job is in PR. Clients include the literary estates that look after Roald Dahl and the Narnia books.

PAPERBACK REISSUES

FANTASY MASTERWORKS

Release Date: 10 October
£9.99 each | Authors: Various
Publisher: Gollancz

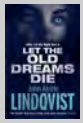


The Fantasy Masterworks series is relaunched in October. The first three titles are John Crowley's 1987 book *Aegypt* (nominated for both the Arthur C Clarke and World Fantasy Awards), Tim Powers's 1992 novel *Last Call* (a World Fantasy award winner) and *The Dragon Griaule*, a collection of six novellas by Lucius Shepard (the first published in 1984).

LET THE OLD DREAMS DIE

★★★★½

Release Date: 26 September
£7.99 | Author: John Ajvide Lindqvist
Publisher: Quercus



Eleven stories from the author of *Let The Right One In*. Most were originally published in Sweden as *Paper Walls*; the exception is the title story, an epilogue to *Let* which offers a glimpse into the future of the characters. **We said:** "Lindqvist is brilliant at finding new ways of approaching well-trodden ground. His real talent, though, is the way he writes people."

THE MAN IN THE MOSS

Release Date: 3 October
£10.99 | Author: Phil Rickman
Publisher: Corvus

Pagan and Christian beliefs co-exist in this 1994 horror novel. In the small town of Bridelow, the Mothers Union pass down knowledge of the old ways. Workmen building a new road discover a body in the peat marsh, ritually sacrificed centuries ago. When it's taken away for study, the town loses its protection against evil... Featuring well-drawn characters, this is a powerfully atmospheric read.

RANDOM ACTS OF SENSELESS VIOLENCE

Release Date: 10 October
£8.99 | Author: Jack Womack
Publisher: Gollancz

The latest in the SF Masterworks series dates from 1995. Lola is 12 years old and living in New York. Unemployment is rife; Presidential assassinations are common. She starts off as a comfortable middle-class kid, but ends up a street-wise member of a girl gang. It's simultaneously chilling and blackly humorous, and Lola's gradual corruption is heartbreaking.

THRONE OF THE CRESCENT MOON

★★★★☆

Release Date: OUT NOW!
£7.99 | Author: Saladin Ahmed
Publisher: Gollancz

Set in a bustling Arabian city, Saladin Ahmed's debut features a 60-year-old hunter of zombified "ghuls"; investigating a murder, he's dragged into a dark conspiracy that threatens the city. **We said:** "Isn't just an epic fantasy reskinned. Smartly written, with a cluster of likeable characters."

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FIRST READ

AN EXTRACT FROM A NEW BOOK

Anno Dracula: Johnny Alucard

by Kim Newman

In this brand-new novel in Kim Newman's award-winning series, Dracula sinks his teeth into 1970s New York and 1980s Hollywood.

THE AUTHOR

Kim Newman is a novelist, critic and broadcaster. His fiction includes the *Anno Dracula* series, *Jago*, *The Quorum* and *Professor Moriarty: The Hound Of The D'Urbervilles*, all published by Titan Books. His non-fiction books include *Nightmare Movies*, *Ghastly Beyond Belief* (with Neil Gaiman) and *Horror: 100 Best Books* (with Stephen Jones). His books and short stories have won a number of awards, including the Children of the Night Award for Best Novel from the Dracula Society, the Bram Stoker Award, the International Horror Guild Award and the British Fantasy Award. His official site is ***www.johnnyalucard.com***

After defeating Van Helsing and rising to power, Count Dracula is finally dead. But with Dracula a relic of the past, the world needs a fresh monster...

As Nancy snuffed, her blood curdled. The taste of vile scabs flooded his mouth. He pushed her away, detaching fangs from her worn wounds. Ropes of bloody spittle hung from her neck to his maw. He wiped his mouth on his wrist, breaking their liquid link. A last electric thrill shuddered, arcing between them. Her heart stopped.

He had pulled her backward onto the bed, holding her down to him as he worked at her throat, her hands feebly scrabbling his sides. Empty, she was deadweight on top of him. He was uncomfortably aware of the quilt of garbage they lay on: magazines, bent spoons, hypodermic needles, used Kleenex, ripped and safety-pinned clothes, banknotes, congealed sandwiches, weeks of uneaten complimentary mints. A package of singles – Sid's "My Way" – had broken under them, turning the much-stained mattress into a fakir's bed of nails. Vinyl shards stabbed his unbroken skin.

Johnny Pop was naked but for leopard-pattern briefs and socks, and the jewellery. Prizing his new clothes too much to get them gory, he had neatly folded and placed the suit and shirt on a chair well away from the bed. His face and chest were sticky with blood and other discharges.

As the red rush burst in his eyes and ears, his senses flared, more acute by a dozenfold. Outside, in the iced velvet October night, police sirens sounded like the wailings of the bereaved mothers of Europe. Distant shots burst as if they were fired in the room, stabs of noise inside his skull. Blobby TV light painted neon a cityscape across ugly wallpaper, populated by psychedelic cockroaches.

He tasted the ghosts of the Chelsea Hotel: drag queens and vampire killers, junkies and pornographers, artists and freaks, visionaries and wasters. Pressing into his mind, they tried to make of his undead body a channel through which they could claw their way back to this plane of existence. Their voices shrieked, clamouring for attention. Cast out of Manhattan, they lusted for restoration to their paved paradise.

Though his throat protested, Johnny forced himself to swallow. Nancy's living blood had scarcely been of better quality than this dead filth. Americans fouled their bodies. Her habits would have killed her soon, even if she hadn't invited a vampire into Room 100. He didn't trouble himself with guilt. Some people were looking for their vampires, begging all their lives for death. His *nosferatu* hold upon the world was tenuous. He could only remain on sufferance. Without the willing warm, he would starve and die. They fed him. They were to blame for him.

Dead blood, heavy with tuinol and dilaudid, smote his brain, washing away the ghosts. He had to be careful; this city was thronged with the truly dead, loitering beyond the ken of the warm, desperate for attention from those who could perceive them. When he was feeding, they crowded around. Having been dead, however briefly, he was a beacon for them.

He yowled and threw the meat-sack off him. He sat up in the bed, nerves drawn taut, and looked at the dead girl. She was ghost-white flesh in black underwear. The flowering neck wound was the least of the marks on her. Scarifications criss-crossed her concave stomach. Pulsing slits opened like gills in her sides, leaking the last of her. The marks of his talons, they were dead mouths, beseeching more kisses from him.

Since arriving in America, he'd been careful to take only those who asked for it, who already lived like ghosts. There were relatively few vampires here. Drained corpses attracted attention. Already, he knew, he'd been noticed. To prosper, he

must practise the skills of his father-in-darkness. First, to hide; then, to master.

The Father was always with him, first among the ghosts. He watched over Johnny and kept him from real harm.

Sid, Belsen-thin but for his Biafra-bloat belly, was slumped in a ratty chair in front of blurry early morning television. He looked at Johnny and at Nancy, incapable of focusing. Earlier, he'd shot up through his eyeball. Colours slid and flashed across his bare, scarred-and-scabbed chest and arms. His head was a skull in a spiky fright-wig, huge eyes swarming as *Secret Squirrel* reflected on the screen of his face. The boy tried to laugh but could only shake. A silly little knife, not even silver, was loosely held in his left hand.

Johnny pressed the heels of his fists to his forehead, and jammed his eyes shut. Blood-red light shone through the skin curtains of his eyelids. He had felt this before. It wouldn't last more than a few seconds. Hell raged in his brain. Then, as if a black fist had struck him in the gullet, peristaltic movement forced fluid up through his throat. He opened his mouth, and a thin squirt of black liquid spattered across the carpet and against the wall.

"Magic spew," said Sid, in amazement.

The impurities were gone. Johnny was on a pure blood-high now. He contained all of Nancy's short life. She had been an all-American girl. She had given him everything.

He considered the boy in the chair and the girl on the bed, the punks. Their tribes were at war, his and theirs. Clothes were their colours, Italian suits versus safety-pinned PVC pants. This session at the Chelsea had been a truce that turned into a betrayal, a rout, a massacre. The Father was proud of Johnny's strategy.

Sid looked at Nancy's face. Her eyes were open, showing only veined white. He gestured with his knife, realising something had happened. At some point in the evening, Sid had stuck his knife into himself a few times. The tang of his rotten blood filled the room. Johnny's fangs slid from their gum-sheaths, but he had no more hunger yet. He was too full.

He thought of the punks as Americans, but Sid was English. A musician, though he couldn't really play his guitar. A singer, though he could only shout.

America was a strange new land. Stranger than Johnny had imagined in the Old Country, stranger than he could have imagined. If he drank more blood, he would soon be an American. Then he would be beyond fear, untouchable. It was what the Father wanted for him.

He rolled the corpse off his shins and cleaned himself like a cat, contorting his supple back and neck, extending his foot-long tongue to lick off the last of the bloodstains. He unglued triangles of vinyl from his body and threw them away. Satisfied, he got off the bed and pulled on crusader white pants, immodestly tight around crotch and rump, loose as a sailor's below the knee. The dark-purple shirt settled on his back and chest, sticking to him where his saliva was still wet. He rattled the cluster of gold chains and medallions – Transylvanian charms, badges of honour and conquest – that hung in the gap between his hand-sized collar-points.

With the white jacket, lined in blood-red silk, Johnny was a blinding apparition. He didn't need a strobe to shine in the dark. Sid raised his knife-hand, to cover his eyes. The boy's reaction was better than any mirror.

"Punk sucks," said Johnny, inviting a response.

"Disco's stupid," Sid sneered back.

Sid was going to get in trouble. Johnny had to make a slave of the boy, to keep himself out of the story.

He found an unused needle on the bed. Pinching the nipple-like bulb, he stuck the needle into his wrist, spearing the vein perfectly. He let the bulb go and a measure of his blood – of Nancy's? – filled the glass phial. He unstuck himself. The tiny wound was invisibly healed by the time he'd smeared away the bead of blood and licked his thumbprint. He tossed the Syrette to Sid, who knew exactly what to do with it, jabbing it into an old arm-track and squirting. Vampire blood slid into Sid's system, something between a virus and a drug. Johnny felt the hook going into Sid's brain, and fed him some line.

Sid stood, momentarily invincible, teeth sharpening, eyes reddened, ears bat-flared, movements swifter. Johnny shared his sense of power, almost paternally. The vampire buzz wouldn't last long, but Sid would be a slave as long as he lived, which was unlikely to be forever. To become *nosferatu*, you had to give and receive blood; for centuries, most mortals had merely been giving; here, a fresh compact between the warm and the undead was invented.

Johnny nodded towards the empty thing on the bed. Nobody's blood was any good to her now. He willed the command through the line, through the hook, into Sid's brain. The boy, briefly possessed, leaped across the room, landing on his knees on the bed, and stuck his knife into the already dead girl, messing up the wounds on her throat, tearing open her skin in dozens of places. As he slashed, Sid snarled, black fangs splitting his gums.

Johnny let himself out of the room.

Pick up* Anno Dracula: Johnny Alucard *(out now from Titan Books) to find out what happens next. Ebooks also available. www.titanbooks.com

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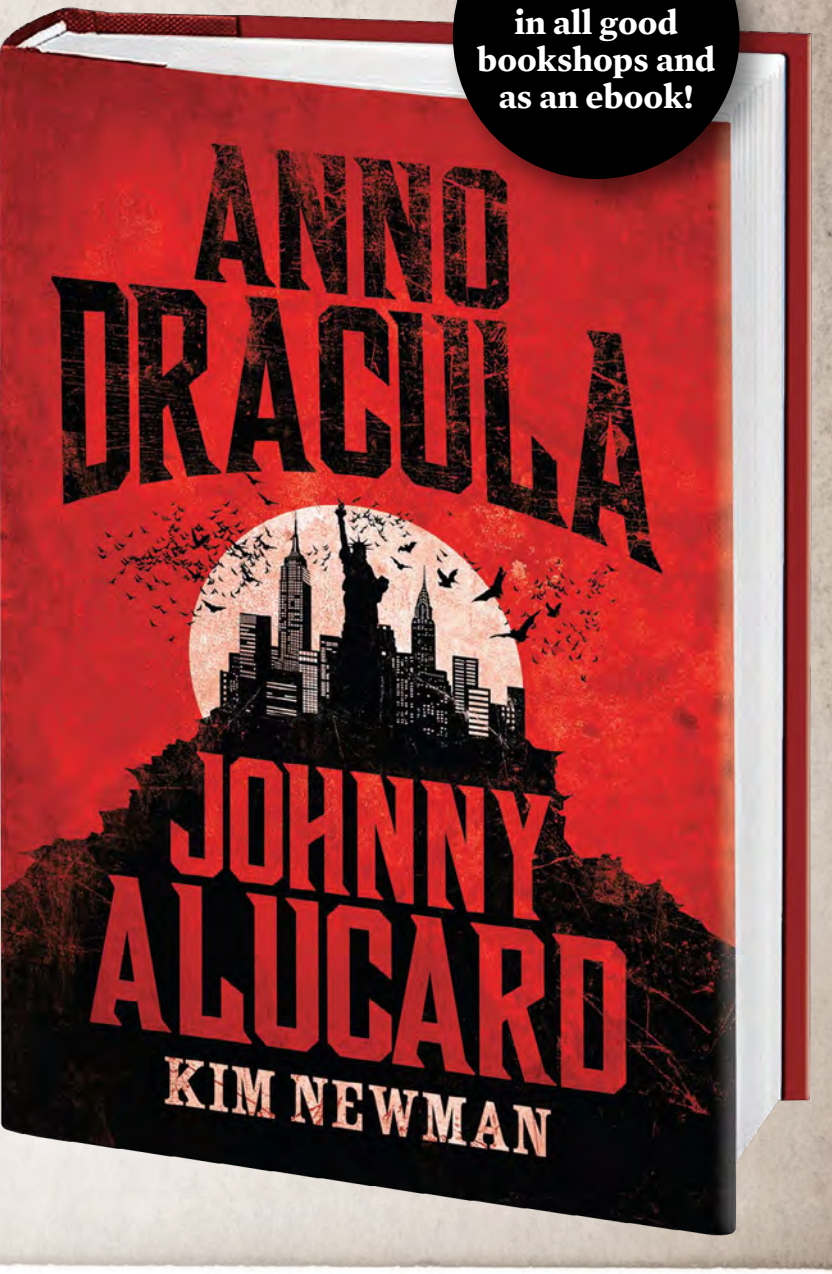


BOOK CLUB 93

Mirrorshades

Edited by Bruce Sterling, 1986

Gareth L Powell considers a Cyberpunk anthology

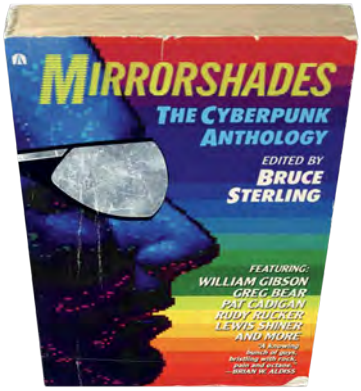
When *Mirrorshades* first came out, many saw it as a warning shot across the bows of the science fiction genre. Designed as a showcase for the newly-emergent Cyberpunk movement, the anthology featured early stories by writers William Gibson, Greg Bear, Bruce Sterling, Pat Cadigan, Rudy Rucker, Marc Laidlaw, James Patrick Kelly, Lewis Shiner, Paul Di Filippo and John Shirley, and it took few prisoners.

The very first story, Gibson's "The Gernsback Continuum", drew a very deliberate bead on the techno-utopian sci-fi of the pulp era, contrasting its shining cities and thirty-lane highways with the world as it actually was: a world of crumbling gas stations, rented Toyotas, and cinemas showing *Nazi Love Motel*. The future it implied wasn't a future constructed by heroic American engineers, but an international, improvised future cobbled together from necessity. The prose is stripped-down and elegant, with hardly a wasted word; the characters just people doing their jobs. SF, Gibson seemed to be saying, could be fine without being pompous or self-consciously experimental.

As a statement of intent, "The Gernsback Continuum" illustrated everything that Bruce Sterling claimed in his introduction: especially a fascination with the fabric of daily life, and an acknowledgement of, and desire to build upon, SF that had gone before.

That point is reinforced by Sterling's choice to include a story co-written by himself and Gibson. "Red Star, Winter Orbit" tells the tale of a Russian astronaut marooned on an orbital space station as his country collapses beneath him. Space, it says, will not be settled by handsome USAF pilots riding gleaming Von Braun rockets, but by those who pull themselves up there anyway they can.

"Cyberpunk," Sterling wrote, "has risen from within the SF genre; it is not an invasion but a modern reform."



SF is about the time it was written, and these stories are about the 1980s

Whether all the stories in *Mirrorshades* reflect that statement is a question open to interpretation. For me, one of my favourite stories in the book is the least "cyberpunky" of them all. Rudy Rucker's "Tales Of Houdini" is set in the 1940s and features magic and fantasy rather than the usual associated tropes of the sub genre. Each of Rucker's "Ware" trilogy of novels is a classic Cyberpunk text; but this story – highly entertaining though it is – doesn't seem to fit the purpose of the book.

Of the other stories, John Shirley's "Freezone" imagines a shantytown floating in the Atlantic, accreted around the remains of abandoned oil platforms, and a rock musician struggling with the encroachment of electronic music. Pat Cadigan's "Rock On" and James Patrick Kelly's "Solstice" also concern themselves with the evolution of drink and drugs and rock 'n' roll.

My personal favourite is the last story. "Mozart In Mirrorshades", co-written by Sterling and Lewis Shiner, is a time-travel romp in which corporations have discovered that changing the past has no effect on the present, and are therefore enthusiastically dedicating themselves to plundering history.

Yes, aspects of the stories have dated – everybody smokes, nobody owns a mobile phone, and some of the "futuristic" technology already looks dangerously obsolete – but science fiction is always about the time in which it was written, and these stories are most definitely about the 1980s.

At that time, Cyberpunk predicted that in the early years of the 21st century, we'd be living in a post-Cold War dystopia ruled by greedy and all-powerful corporations, in a world where data was the most important commodity and misfits and loners stalked the virtual frontier in search of mischief. Thirty years on – as I scan headlines concerning international cyber war, corporate tax avoidance, online fraud and the latest antics of Anonymous – that prediction doesn't sound so far off the mark. SFX

Gareth L Powell is the author of the novels Ack-Ack Macaque, The Recollection and Silversands.

LIKE THIS? TRY THESE!

Burning Chrome by William Gibson (1986)
Includes the classic stories "New Rose Hotel", "Johnny Mnemonic" and the title story, which is set in the same world as Gibson's 1984 novel *Neuromancer*.

Ascendancies by Bruce Sterling (2007)
A retrospective collection of Sterling's best stories, starting with his early Shaper/Mechanist space operas and finishing with a story published in 2007.

YOUR OPINIONS

Join the debate at http://bit.ly/SFXBookClub13

Read it when it first came out, and it was like a breath of ozone-charged air! Every story had these bursts of visionary intensity, laced with devil-may-care turbo-narrative.
Mike Cobley

This was a game-changing book. It lead me directly to William Gibson and *Neuromancer* and inspired me to go out and form a cyberpunk band, Terminal Power Company, which lead in turn to me having a career in music for a while and then in IT (still don't quite have a neural jack yet though).
Paul Aspel

Before reading *Mirrorshades* I had formed two impressions of the book: firstly, it was a classic anthology; secondly, it was *the* cyberpunk anthology. Neither of these turned out to be true. As Sterling suggests in his preface, this is really just a bunch of writers who know and like each other and are involved in a loose creative web. If you can find the unifying tenets, themes and topics in *Mirrorshades* than I take my hat off to you. This brings us to the question of how good the anthology is as a bunch of stories. To which the answer is: not very. By my count there are only two good stories: "The Gernsback Continuum" and "Petra"... the Gibson and Bear stories are the ones really worth reading and this is an abysmal hit rate for an anthology.
Martin Lewis

I loved it – it was unlike anything else I'd read before. I too went on to Gibson and was up until 4am because I couldn't put the book down during the run on Straylight.
Alison Colegrove

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GET READING!

To coincide with *Who*'s 50th, we'll be reading Target's *Doctor Who And The Daleks* in issue 242.

NEXT ISSUE

Author Emma Newman will be talking us through the Douglas Adams classic *The Hitchhiker's Guide To The Galaxy*.

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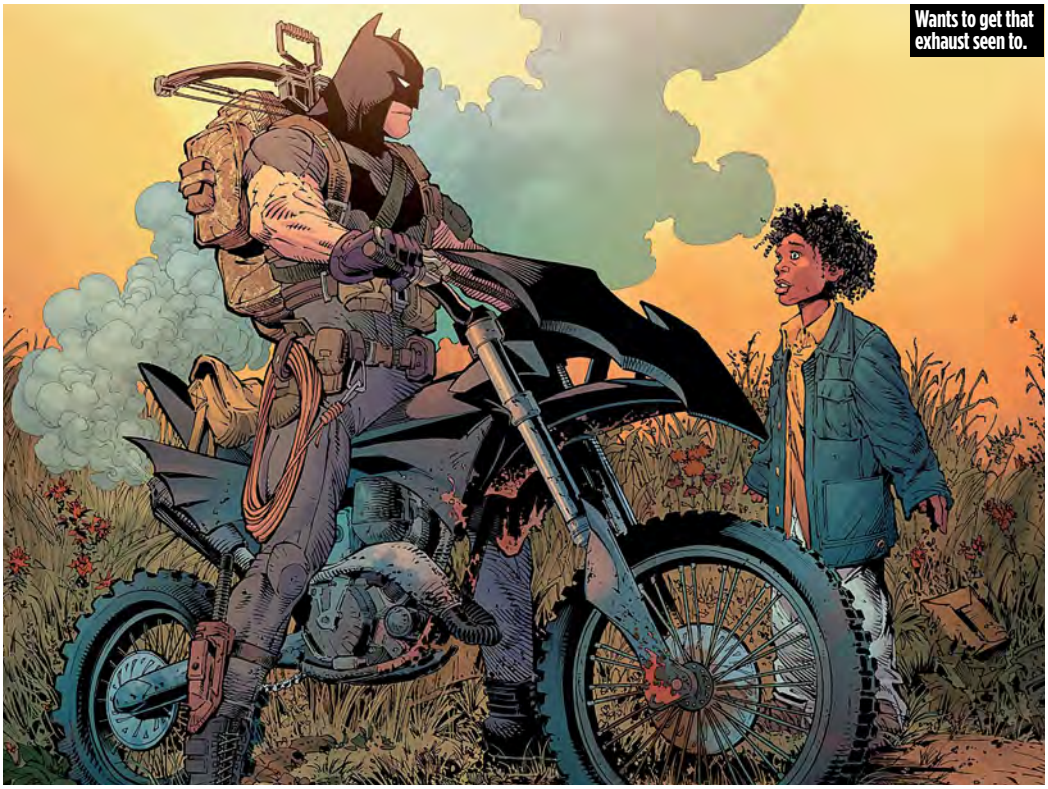
Wants to get that exhaust seen to.

Overview

Batman: Zero Year

The Dark Knight Reboots

★★★★½

Release Date: OUT NOW!
$3.99 per issue | Publisher: DC Comics
Writer: Scott Snyder
Artists: Gregg Capullo, Danny Miki, Rafael Albuquerque

It's Bat-origin time again. Following the DC Universe's New 52 continuity reboot, and Grant Morrison's exploration of Superman's early days in his run on *Action Comics*, sooner or later attention was going to turn to the birth of the Batman. What's surprising is that while Superman has had a near-absurd number of origin retellings over the years, this is the first DCU update of Batman's beginnings since Frank Miller's iconic 1987 story *Year One*.

The new origin has big shoes to fill, and you can tell that writer Scott Snyder knows it – not only from the knowing *Zero Year* title, but also the way he's deliberately avoiding a simple retread of old ground. Three issues in (of a 12-issue epic), and the series is already finding new angles and fresh material in the familiar story, while still including all the key elements (like Bruce's inspirational bat-encounter).

Zero Year sees a twentysomething Bruce Wayne making his first tentative steps into fighting crime after returning to Gotham following a worldwide odyssey to sharpen up his fighting skills. Soon he's facing off against the mysterious Red Hood Gang, but what he doesn't know is that his uncle Phillip is keeping some very bad company. The Riddler is lurking in the shadows, and has big plans for Gotham City...

Packing plenty of action and intrigue into every issue, Snyder keeps the story fast-paced and involving, riding the line between novelty and over-familiarity with style, while also giving us a strong take on the early days of the Bruce/Alfred dynamic.

It's helped in this by some typically excellent work from art team Greg Capullo and Danny Miki, who bring plenty of cartoony energy to the fight sequences while also handling the extensive dialogue scenes with a deft touch. They're backed up by equally impressive art from Snyder's *American Vampire* collaborator Rafael Albuquerque, who showcases his angular, vivid style in the regular back-up stories, each of which explores a different moment from Bruce's lengthy worldwide quest to learn the crime-fighting ropes.

An engaging and well-crafted superhero comic, *Zero Year* doesn't have the dramatic heft and diamond-hard focus of *Year One* – especially since it's a 12-issue story, in comparison to *Year One*'s tightly-structured four – but makes up for it with smart plotting, strong atmosphere and a great sense of fun. Snyder has set up an intriguing origin for this latest iteration of the Caped Crusader, and the Batman mythos looks to be in very capable hands. **Saxon Bullock**

? You'll find out what other DCU characters were up to in Batman's "Zero Year" during a big multi-title event starting in November.

Superman: would make a good miner.

Overview

Superman Unchained

The Big Blue Boy Scout breaks out

★★★☆☆

Release Date: OUT NOW!
$3.99 | Publisher: DC Comics
Writer: Scott Snyder
Artist: Jim Lee, Scott Williams, Dustin Nguyen

As the mixed response to David Goyer's gritty *Man Of Steel* screenplay proves, it's hard to get the Last Kryptonian right in this day and age. The latest creative team to take a stab at it are DC's top two heavyweight talents: *Batman* scribe Scott Snyder and superstar artist Jim Lee.

Snyder's exhilarating script makes for an absorbing read, neatly balancing some bravura action sequences with a slowly building conspiracy thriller plot involving a belligerent General Lane and a secret army base.

The mysterious Wraith is introduced as a dark counterpart to the Man of Tomorrow, depicted here as a remote but noble presence. However, the alien enforcer's obviously sinister Darkseid-esque appearance leaves you in no doubt of his malevolent intentions even before he reveals his hand in issue three.

Unfortunately, Snyder's dense narration doesn't always leave room for Lee's typically dynamic, widescreen art to breathe. Visually impressive if unwieldy to unfold, issue one's pullout, oversized, double-sided splash is a refreshing testament to the power of good old-fashioned print comics in an increasingly digital market.

Mostly accessible even for those who haven't kept up to date with the much maligned New 52's already convoluted continuity, *Superman Unchained* is well worth investigating even if you're a New 52 refusenik. **Stephen Jewell**

? Coffee store Rood Awakenings, whose logo is seen at several points, is named after DC marketing exec John Rood.

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OVERVIEW

The Wake

SFX RECOMMENDS

Creature From The Arctic Circle

★★★★★

Release Date: OUT NOW!
$2.99 | Publisher: Vertigo
Writer: Scott Snyder
Artists: Sean Murphy, Matt Hollingsworth

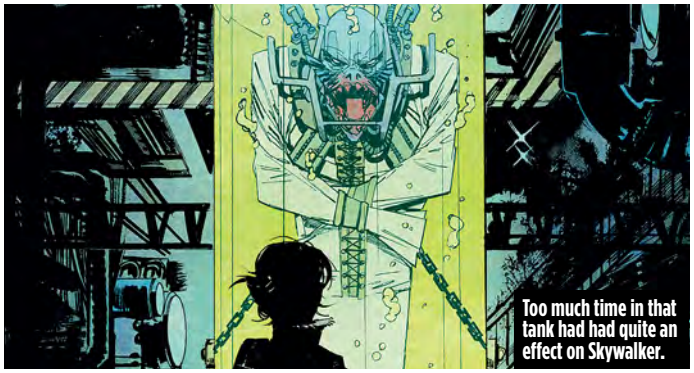
Scott Snyder and Sean Murphy are two of the most respected people working in comics. Snyder, because of his brilliant work on *Batman* and *American Vampire*; Murphy because of his incendiary *Punk Rock Jesus*, arguably the best religious satire since *Preacher*. Combine them and you get one of the biggest event books of 2013. Part way into its 10-issue run, does it live up to the hype? Does a shark shit in the sea?

Bookmarked by leaps into the near-future and distant past, *The Wake*'s first three issues take place mainly in the present day. We follow marine biologist Lee Archer as she's recruited by the Department Of Homeland Security to join a team of experts investigating a disturbing discovery made in the depths of the ocean off Alaska.

This is a glorious comic, with Snyder's trademark mastery of plot matched by Murphy's imaginative vision. At almost every page-turn you'll find your jaw dropping at the stunning artwork – looking like a Japanese Saturday morning cartoon directed by Christopher Nolan – before you gather your senses and focus on the dialogue, which frequently alludes to psychological complexities moving beneath the surface of the cast's relationships, ready to strike at any moment.

The Wake will probably work best in collected form, purely in terms of pacing – it's hard waiting the month between issues. Which isn't to say we recommend you wait. Dive into *The Wake* as soon as possible; you won't want to come up for air.

Sam Ashurst



? Sean Murphy based Archer's look on Emma Watson: "There's something about her that hides something under the surface, I think."

OVERVIEW

The X-Files: Season 10

The truth is still out there

★★½☆☆

Release Date: OUT NOW!
$3.99 | Publisher: IDW
Writers: Joe Harris, Chris Carter
Artists: Michael Walsh, Jordie Bellaire

With *Buffy's* "Season eight" revival having paved the way, it was only a matter of time before another genre TV series made a comic-book comeback. That the latest example should be *The X-Files* is no surprise: back in the mid-'90s, Chris Carter's SF conspiracy thriller was huge; IDW's new series is out to recapture that paranoid magic.

Unfortunately, instead of simply saying "Hey, let's just set up a new series of self-contained spooky mysteries," writer Joe Harris (with story contributions from Carter) has decided to directly connect this ongoing comic to the convoluted "alien colonisation" mythos that made the later seasons of *The X-Files* such a drag to watch.

The plot picks up with ex-FBI agents Mulder and Scully living a quietly anonymous suburban life, until a group of sinister cloaked figures set out to track down Scully's adopted child. Soon, it's a major continuity-fest with the unexpected returns of the presumed-deceased Cigarette Smoking Man and Lone Gunmen, but while these first three issues get the mood right, they fumble any genuine suspense.

The story lacks the sense of reality the show did so well

Michael Walsh's art has a loose, realistic feel reminiscent of *Gotham Central*'s Michael Lark, and Harris does a good job of capturing the voices of the heroes, but the story lacks the sense of reality the show did so well. Hopefully later issues will improve – otherwise, this may end up showcasing too many of the show's weaknesses, and not enough of its strengths. **Saxon Bullock**

? The original '90s *X-Files* comic series featured art from Charlie Adlard, now best known for his work on *The Walking Dead*.

GRAPHIC NOVEL

Battling Boy

Half the battle

★★★★☆

Release Date: 8 October
208 pages | £10.99 (paperback)
Publisher: First Second
Writer/artist: Paul Pope

In the modern comics market, any attempt at reaching out to a new, younger audience is worthy of a ticker tape parade – especially from a multi-Eisner-award-winning talent like Paul Pope (two of them for writing and illustrating *Batman: Year 100*). He's been working on *Battling Boy* for years – it was originally meant to come out in 2007 – and he's done it for publishers First Second, who've been inventive in how they present and market comics. It's designed to sit next to Young Adult novels rather than amongst the usual DC and Marvel fare.

That said, it is A Fresh Take On Superheroes. This we have seen before. But Pope's baroque style does make it feel genuinely fresh. It doesn't try to site its characters or situations in a realistic world, as 97% of Fresh Takes On Superheroes do, but instead aims to create its own world, which it does with great success. Its setting is bold and brilliant (Arcopolis, a continent-sized city which is under siege from monsters), and the protagonists (Battling Boy, a child of the gods, sent to save the city as an initiation; and Aurora West, the daughter of the city's fallen science genius/vigilante) are hugely appealing.

The only minus point is that it doesn't feel like a complete story. *Battling Boy* is the first half a two-book series, but there's a good deal more set-up than payoff here. Yet it's exciting, funny and inventive, and there's no question it deserves further volumes.

Eddie Robson

? Pope says when he needs Battling Boy to have "a genuine reaction to something" he thinks of his nephew when he was 12.

The Bureau: XCOM Declassified

Mad Men In Black

★★★★☆

Release Date: OUT NOW!
£39.99 | Format Reviewed: PC
Also available on: Xbox 360 and PS3
Publisher: 2K Games

It's the 1960s, and aliens have invaded the United States. You are William Carter, a gruff CIA agent and World War 2 veteran, and your job is to send them home – in a body bag. With its classy '60s fashion and retro-futuristic tech, it's like the cast of *Mad Men* joined the Ghostbusters.

The Bureau: XCOM Declassified is the origin story of the XCOM organisation from the popular strategy series, but this time it comes in the form of a real-time shooter rather than a turn-based game of chess-with-lasers. The tactics are still there, but in a different form. It isn't as deep as its predecessors, but it isn't dumb either.

Think *Mass Effect*'s combat – over-the-shoulder shooting and powers – combined with the ability to slow down time and issue orders to your AI companions with an intuitive command wheel. You can order them to take cover, distract the enemy by taunting them, or focus all their fire on a powerful foe, and they're smart enough not to bumble into danger.

It's the way you can combine powers that makes the combat interesting. The shooting itself is basic – going from standard '60s-era guns to laser rifles crafted from recovered alien tech – but it's when you start messing with the special abilities that things get entertaining. For example, order your squad to drop a turret, then lift it into the air to get a better angle on an entrenched enemy.

And afterwards, he'll down a whisky.

Between missions you can explore XCOM itself, an atmospheric underground base that looks like an old NASA control room. You can talk to the staff, test weapons on the shooting range, listen to audio recordings, read notes, and immerse yourself in the story – which, incidentally, is very good. It's part B-movie, part modern sci-fi epic. Its vision of a ruined America is evocative, if not technically astounding. The lighting is superb, but the world itself is a bit rough around the edges.

If you try to play the game like a straight-up shooter, you won't last long. You have to make smart use of flanking, powers and cover to outsmart enemies, which can obliterate your health in seconds if you aren't careful. But don't expect the same richness of tactics seen in previous XCOM games. **Andy Kelly**

? This was originally a first-person shooter, but underwent changes during development and was switched to third-person.

Saints Row IV

Saints preserve us

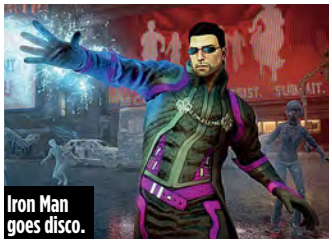
★★★☆☆

Release Date: OUT NOW!
£39.99 | Format reviewed: Xbox 360
Also available on: PS3 and PC
Publisher: Deep Silver

How do you top *Saints Row: The Third*, a game which began with a skydiving shootout and only got crazier? By being crazier still. Graduating from gangbanger to President of the United States, it's your civil duty to defend Earth against invading aliens using an arsenal of superpowers. However, something's lost in the transition from sandbox to satirical sci-fi.

No longer are you resisting cops under blue skies, but battling charmless aliens under a blood red one. Your base of operations isn't a plush pad, but a grey spaceship. Gags still land (at one point you press X to "proposition" actor Keith David, *Mass Effect*-style), but the story's lost the plot.

From your spaceship, you jack into a virtual construct of the last game's locale, Steelport. It's essentially *The Matrix* by way of the Farrelly brothers. The simulation grants you spectacular powers, like being able to levitate objects, bound over buildings and glide, but the game grows hollow and unsatisfying in direct proportion to its preposterousness. With a distinct lack of quieter moments, there's simply nothing to contextualise the mayhem.


Iron Man goes disco.

Still, over the eight hours of play, you'll rarely be bored. The minigames are madcap and the missions eclectic, seeing you pilot star fighters, don mech suits and sneak through alien spaceships in the buff. But, while exciting, *Saints Row IV* is never particularly fulfilling. **Ben Griffin**

? Joining the third game's dildo-shaped baseball bat is a Japanese variation – a flopping tentacle called the Violator. Classy.

Killer Is Dead

Assassin's Sleaze

★★☆☆☆

Release Date: OUT NOW!
£39.99 | Format Reviewed: Xbox 360
Also available on: PS3
Publisher: Deep Silver

Like almost all of director Suda51's works (*Killer7*, *Lollipop Chainsaw*), third-person action game *Killer Is Dead* stitches madcap non-sequiturs around an already loony plot and nasty action.

You're cast as sword-for-hire cyborg Mondo Zappa, who works for a monster execution firm that's somewhat similar to Angel Investigations and that protects Earth and, er, the Moon. Every level takes the form of an execution contract, during which you'll need to slice through misshapen monsters with your sword and multi-purpose cybernetic arm. Though the government foots the bill, customers are charged extra for "clean-up" and you're paid on a performance-based scale. The better you do, the more impressive the upgrades you can plug into yourself.

Flashy swords won't save your game, sorry.

Fit-baiting flashes of colour play up the style to almost nauseating levels, but it comes at the expense of substance. *Killer is Dead* feels like a game made entirely from the best bits of Suda51's other titles – if the individual mechanics had all been weakened first. Combat isn't as visceral as *No More Heroes*', levels aren't as well-crafted as *Shadows Of The Damned*'s, and the script isn't as funny as *Lollipop Chainsaw*'s.

One original idea comes in the form of Gigolo Mode: minigames in which you earn points and pick up girls by ogling their chest and crotch while they're looking away. It's every bit as awful as it sounds, and left us eyeing up our shelves desperate to find something else to play instead. **Matthew Pellett**

? Creator Suda51 also penned a short story called *Killer7: Killer Is Dead* – a prequel to GameCube cult hit *Killer7*.

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AUDIO CDS

Doctor Who

Charley Pollard, Sontarans and National Socialism

Enemy Aliens

★★★★☆

Release Date: OUT NOW!
60 minutes | £10.20 (CD)/£3.99 (download)
Publisher: AudioGO

Starlight Robbery

★★½☆☆

Release Date: OUT NOW!
120 minutes | £14.99 (CD)/£12.99 (download)
Publisher: Big Finish

The Alchemists

★★★½☆

Release Date: OUT NOW!
65 minutes | £8.99 (CD)/£7.99 (download)
Publisher: Big Finish

WITH *DOCTOR WHO*'S 50th anniversary fast approaching, it's time for AudioGO's *Destiny Of The Doctor* series to tackle the problem of Paul McGann only having notched up one on-screen appearence. They solve this by linking back to the McGann stories released by Big Finish; *Enemy Aliens* is narrated by Charley Pollard (India Fisher), the adventure-loving '30s toff who was the Eighth Doctor's longest-running audio companion.

Enemy Aliens sees the Doctor and Charley encountering trouble in '30s London, where they're caught up in a madcap manhunt that's also a shameless homage to classic pulp thriller *The 39 Steps*. Witty storytelling combined with excellent narration from Fisher makes this lively adventure the most enjoyable instalment yet of what's been a rather uneven series.

Elsewhere, the mood remains firmly set to "romp" in Big Finish's latest monthly release. *Starlight Robbery* continues a trilogy starring the Seventh Doctor and ex-Nazi scientist Elizabeth Klein, as their quest to locate a missing professor leads them to an alien weapons auction where rival bidders include the Sontarans. There's plenty of intrigue and double-crossing, but the clunky blend of action and comedy wears out its welcome fast.

Finally, the *Companion Chronicles* series shows us more of the First Doctor's travels with granddaughter Susan (Carole Ann Ford). *The Alchemists* sees the TARDIS arriving in 1932 Berlin, with Nazism on the rise and an important gathering of scientists proving tempting for the Doctor. Soon there's a potential threat to the timelines, but the story sticks to being an old-school purely historical tale. While the plot is a little thin at times, the level of detail and the important historical parallels with the present day make this a flawed but satisfying listen. **Saxon Bullock**.

? Also out: a box set of readings of two novelisations of Colin Baker 13-parter "The Trial Of A Time Lord".

BOARDGAME

Bioshock Infinite: The Siege Of Columbia

Battle Beyond The Clouds

★★★★☆

Release Date: OUT NOW!
Age 13 and up | Two or four players | £67.99
Manufacturer: Plaid Hat Games

THOUGHT THE ENDING OF *Bioshock Infinite* was confusing? Wait til you attempt combat in *The Siege Of Columbia*. With dice, cards, upgrades and miscellaneous modifiers all contributing to final numerical values, even a working knowledge of quantum theory won't cut it.

Get your head round the complexities of kicking ass and there's a lot of fun to be had with this faction-based boardgame set in the floating city of Columbia. Two or four players (split into teams) assume command of Zachary Comstock's ultra-nationalist Founders or Daisy Fitzroy's military insurgents, the Vox Populi, battling for control of famous locations across the city using a range of tiny troops.

Simple strategy is complicated by World Event votes and videogame protagonists Booker and Elizabeth – agents of chaos here who aren't under the control of any player but can leave a devastating hole in your defences should you fall foul of them.

As you'd expect given the price tag, it's beautifully presented. The 52 unit models are a little basic, but aren't lacking in charm for fans. It's best played with two people (four player games go on and on...) and it'll take a few goes to understand the myriad complications, but does an admirable job of capturing the spirit and gleeful thrills of the videogame. **Jordan Farley**

? Good places to start learning the rules are the tutorial (http://bit.ly/SFXSHOCK) and this video: http://bit.ly/SFXSHOCK2

AUDIO DOWNLOAD

Thirteen

Lucky for you

★★★½☆

Release Date: OUT NOW!
217 minutes | £10
Publisher: Spokenworld Audio
Readers: Arthur Darvill, Lalla Ward, Gemma Arterton and more.

THIS NICELY-ASSEMBLED collection of "spine-tingling tales" uses a fourteenth story split into three parts, "Hidden Track", to tie the other 13 together. In it, the narrator relates coming across a peculiar old shop in Scarborough, whose proprietor reveals 13 records containing strange hidden tracks; this sparks in him the desire to own the records for himself.

Ironically, "Hidden Track" is the weakest story in the collection, as the lack of close attention to history and the overblown narration make suspending disbelief rather tricky. You just have to accept it as a campy piece of framing, like you'd get in a cheesy portmanteau horror film.

A lot of the stories lack a sense of place and time. They also don't really play with the nature of audio or the idea of being on a record, being mostly readings of short stories.

The standout tracks are "One Hit Wanda" by Kim Newman, written as the recollections of one of the characters in the story, and "I Wish" by Johnny Mains, which has a clearly urban, contemporary Scottish setting; in both cases, the style makes the story feel immediate and therefore scarier than most of the others.

But there's not really a bad story, or bad vocal performance, amongst the lot. *Doctor Who* fans note: several of those performances come from *Who* alumni, including former companions Arthur Darvill (Rory) and Lalla Ward (Romana). **Miriam McDonald**

? Other authors featured include Dan Abnett, Stephen "*Eleventh Hour*" Gallagher, and horror novelist Simon Clark.

Box Of Delights

What we've been playing with this month

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Batman Bobble-Heads

Funko | Height: 18-19cm | RRP £18.99 each | £14.99 each (free UK delivery)

So much merch based on the '60s *Batman* TV series has hit the market lately. Surely if Warner and Fox can come to an agreement over these, a DVD box set can't be that far off? Fingers crossed. In the meantime, here's figures of Batman, Robin, Catwoman and the Joker, all with over-sized noggins, which oscillate wildly at the slightest provocation. If you live in LA or Japan maybe they function as a useful early warning system for earthquakes?

Star Trek Diecasts

Mattel | Length: 11-19.5cm | RRP £24.99 each | £19.99 each

That drab grey thing on the left is the heavily-armed USS Vengeance from *Into Darkness*. Then we have the USS Kelvin (from the 2009 film), the USS Excelsior (*Star Trek VI*) and, heading to attack them, *Into Darkness*'s spiky-looking Klingon Bird Of Prey (not a patch on the original design, frankly). They're all neat, but why are the various nacelles and wings made of bendy/snappable plastic, not sturdy metal? Bah. Pop them on their little stands for display *or* wrap yourself in a sheet, grip one in your hand and pretend you're some type of giant alien god: the choice is yours.

THREE OF A KIND

Doctor Who Clothing

SILK SCARF

Lovarzi | www.lovarzi.co.uk

Lovarzi released a Fourth Doctor scarf last year. Now they're branching out into more *Who* products, including this 100% silk scarf worn by Sylvester McCoy. Its paisley pattern was McCoy's sly nod to his Scottish roots.

QUESTION MARK TANKTOP

Lovarzi | www.lovarzi.co.uk

It started with a subtle motif on shirt collars, but by McCoy's time question marks had spread like a naff rash. Peter Jackson now owns the original of this.

BURGUNDY SCARF

Lovarzi | www.lovarzi.co.uk

A 13' long replica of the scarf from Tom Baker's final season (for which producer John Nathan-Turner had the costume designer create an all-burgundy look). Prices and release dates were TBC as we went to press.

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Star Wars Black Series Figures

Hasbro | Height: 8cm-15cm | RRP: £29.99 | £24.99 (free UK delivery)

These aren't like the *Star Wars* figures of our youth. Not only have they grown a few inches, but there's extra points of articulation and loads more weapons. But despite all the detail there's still something kinda funny lookin' about Luke. And whose idea was it to include a quote from each character on the packaging? R2 was never one of the galaxy's great orators, after all. This quartet are joined by eight other figures in the first wave. Fifteen more will follow later in the year.

Iron Man 3 Mark 42 Bust

Hot Toys | Height: 23cm | RRP £99.99 | £79.99 (free UK delivery)

Yes, it's easy to imagine a trademark Robert Downey Jr smirk at the notion of a 42" bust but please banish such smut from your minds – this is a limited edition quarter-scale collectible commemorating Tony Stark's Mark 42 armour from *Iron Man 3*. It lights up in a crime-scaring way if you slip a battery in. Take that, Mandarin! Eighty nicker is steep, though – think how much whisky that'd buy you! (Yes, we learnt nothing from "Demon In A Bottle".)

Walking Dead Vinyl Figures

Funko | Height: 10.5cm | RRP £12.99 each | £11.99 each

Funko's ongoing mission to make a collectible vinyl figure of every atom of matter in the universe continues with their latest *Walking Dead* wave, based on the gritty third season. From left to right we have an eyepatched Governor; a glowering, machete-wielding Rick Grimes; and a blade-armed Merle Dixon, all looking inappropriately cutesy. The Governor is our fave (love the detail on his eyepatch); Michael Rooker's features don't really translate into stylised form, though. Also available (but not pictured – sadly, ours went AWOL) is a zombie in prison guard riot gear.

THINGS TO COME

MORE GOODIES COMING YOUR WAY

VORTEX MANIPULATOR WATCH

ETA: OCTOBER

Ah, Captain Jack, how we miss you and your equal opportunities approach to rumpy pumpy. His wrist-mounted vortex manipulator enabled the death-proof shagger to gad about the universe; this replica features a digital watch inside. Ianto wouldn't have approved – he preferred using a stopwatch to measure whatever the hell it was they used to get up to.

SPIDER GREMLIN ACTION FIGURE

ETA: NOVEMBER

This baby is based on the sequence in *Gremlins 2* where a Gremlin is turned into a freakish hybrid after consuming a spider serum. Its jaw is hinged, and each of its hideous legs is articulated in three places. The price tag is pretty hefty, but then it is a whopper, standing 10" tall and nearly 15" across. No wonder it comes with a stand to provide support for display.

ALIEN REACTION FIGURES

ETA: JANUARY

Way back in 1979, a series of *Alien* action figures were developed, but never actually went into production. With the aid of 34-year-old prototypes, they've now been dragged from an alternate universe into ours, as part of the Super7 ReAction range. All five – the Alien, Ripley, Ash, Dallas and Kane – come in '70s-style blister packaging, and look delightfully retro.

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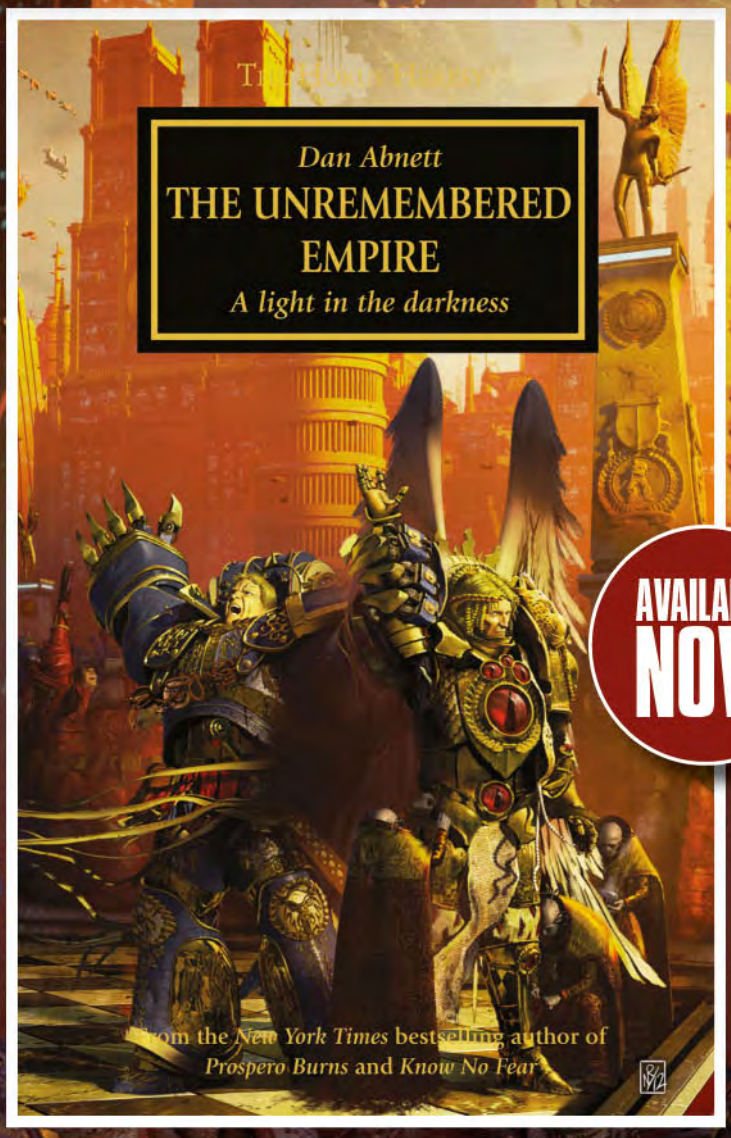

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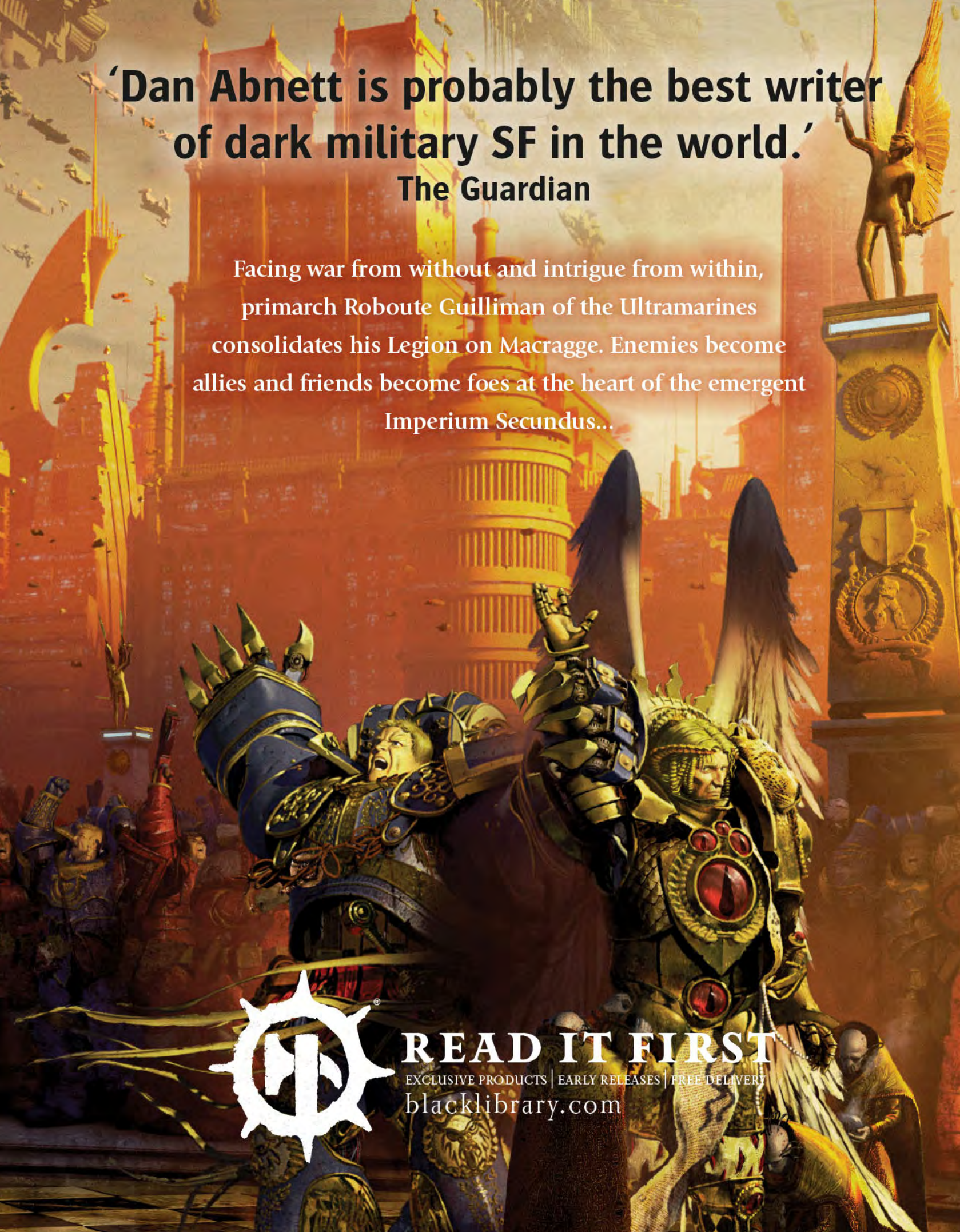
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Speedball 2: Brutal Deluxe

Richard Edwards, Deputy Editor

"Some people believe football is a matter of life and death," legendary Liverpool FC manager Bill Shankly once said. "I can assure you it is much, much more important than that." If he'd lived 150 years later and managed a Speedball team in a fictional future where the masses want a bit of blood as a side dish to their sport, he'd probably have put a stronger emphasis on the death part of the equation. Without the violence, Speedball would be nothing.

It's a sport that would be a blast to watch live. Teams of nine guys on rollerskates whizz around a chrome-plated arena, their attempts to put the ball in the goal being nearly as important as putting their opponents in hospital – how different football or rugby would be if you scored as much for injuring another player as you did for a legitimate goal.

But beyond being set around a brilliantly subversive future sport, *Speedball 2* deserves its legendary status because it was so damn fun to play. I spent hours on the family PC, wearing out the Q, A, O, P and space keys, as I tried to guide Brutal Deluxe (the default team) to league and cup glory against the likes of Damocles, Steel Fury, Revolver and (after promotion to the top flight) Super Nashwan. Not only was the game fast, it was easy to get the hang of, based around a control system that allowed flat or lobbed passes, and even a subtle degree of "aftertouch". You also got to manage your team, using the money earned during games to train up your own players, or sign new ones. And therein lay the dilemma – should you go for the instant gratification of bringing in a fully-formed star player, or play the long game of moulding the likes of Darren, Barry and Nigel into champions. (If you wanted to beat the best, the latter was your only option.)

Games were given added spice by score multipliers, warp gates, bonus-spewing bounce domes and, best of all, a device that allowed you to charge the metal ball so that it would knock out any opposition player who touched it – all handy devices that could steal victory in an instant. Alan Hansen would have fun talking about that on *Match Of The Day*. SFX

FACT ATTACK!

- The original *Speedball* was released in 1988, and featured five players per team rather than nine. The superior *Speedball 2* followed in 1990.
- When medical robots came onto the court to collect injured players, they were accompanied by shouts of "Ice cream! Ice cream!" Goals were accompanied by a celebratory shimmy from the players, rather similar to veteran Cameroon striker Roger Milla's dance at Italia '90.
- The PC version came on a single floppy disc – with a capacity of just 1.44 Mb. That's the size of an average sized digital photo. Without a save function, entire seasons had to be played in one go.
- Updated versions of the game are now available on iOS and Android.

SEE YOU NEXT MONTH! WEDNESDAY 16 OCTOBER DETAILS ON PAGE 27

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